

ID-10T Error

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ID-10T Error

by [babyblueglasses](#)

Summary

When Loki has to leave his laptop with Tony in the IT department for repairs, Tony burns to know what lurks in the private files of the best friend he's been pining over. Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back. Right? Right?!

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The first time Tony met his boss's less favored son, Loki was wearing a sleek black suit with its jacket blowing back in the wind as he took a drag from a cigarette.

Tony'd heard something out on the fire escape and stuck his head outside to investigate.

Tony tugged at one of his hoodie strings, suddenly self-conscious of the fact that he smelled like calzones and had come to work with bedhead. It wasn't like anyone came down to visit IT. Not in the lowest level of Asgard Corp. The raven haired man must've heard Tony open the rusty door, yet he hadn't reacted. Tony didn't recognize him from behind. "What're you doing?" Tony asked.

"Taking my smoke break, what does it look like?" He didn't even grace Tony with eye contact. He simply made his caustic remark, his back to Tony as he faced the dingy cityscape.

"Whatever, man." Tony shut the door.

He flopped back down at his desk chair. The alcove outside was hidden under the fire escape, so he got why it made a nice hideaway. But it was Tony's hideaway, just like the rest of the basement IT department. He had a good gig here. He fixed shit when it went down and spent the other ninety percent of the time coming up with his own programs and inventions. Tony wasn't sure who was outside, but whoever it was clearly was at the top of the payroll and Tony didn't want his position down here jeopardized.

Tony pulled up some coding, hoping like mad that whoever it was would just leave the way they came.

Ten minutes later, Tony was yanked back to reality by pounding against the exit door. Tony pried himself away from the computer screen.

Tony dragged the heavy door back to find himself face to face with the man. The wind had disheveled his hair and tie, and Tony was briefly, awkwardly aware that the man was attractive. There was a subtle hint of panic beneath Loki's miffed expression. "Why didn't you just walk around to the front?" Tony asked.

"Because I don't wish to be seen by my oaf of a father."

The acerbic tone and gruff way Loki pushed past Tony in the door frame were off putting. There was nothing warm about him, and yet, Tony knew what desperately avoiding your dad was like. "Loki, right?" He vaguely recognized the man from company photos.

Loki gave him a prim, forced smile.

"You can hide out in here next time if you want." Tony didn't mean much by it. He didn't really even know why he offered. "Just smoke that shit outside."

Loki dug the cigarette pack out of his pocket. He held it inches from Tony's face. *Finest Quality Actor Cigarettes*. "Why're you smoking fake cigarettes?"

"Because after giving up the real shit months ago, I'm not so keen on giving up my breaks," Loki

replied, tucking them into his suit pocket. He gave Tony's department a swift once over before brushing his hair back and straightening his tie. "See you...?" Loki's eyes flicked towards Tony's absent badge.

"Tony," he supplied begrudgingly.

"Tony," Loki muttered, heading for the door. Tony hadn't expected to see him again.

Except he did show up on his cigarette breaks, and they started talking. Slowly at first, but then it turned out they liked to complain about the same things. And Tony started looking forward to Loki's visits because the man had easily become his best friend. Loki showed up like clockwork. His gorgeous green eyes lit up as he told Tony about the drama upstairs, or teased Tony about the piles of wires he was untangling, or stole food from Tony's fridge and sat with him as they swapped bullshit stories.

Sometimes, Tony found his gaze lingering a little too long, when Loki said something particularly charming or laughed at something Tony'd said. But Tony couldn't be attracted to his boss's son. It'd jeopardize his place here, and Tony had no one to fall back on if he lost this job. In truth, it was more than that. Tony'd never had any reason to think that Loki wanted something more with him. Loki was just his best friend. That was that.

The door creaked open. It was too early for Loki to be here, Tony realized, as he recognized the footfalls of Loki's designer Italian leather oxfords. "Tony," Loki said as he looked up from the screen.

Loki's usual charm and confidence were missing. He had a silver laptop tucked under his arm, and more than a little of the panic Tony'd seen in their first meeting ages ago.

"What's up, buttercup?"

He didn't like that look on Loki at all. Had someone finally said something about Loki disappearing down here? Tony liked to think that nobody knew about it because Loki still carried around a pack of cigarettes, fake in a real box now, but someone had to know. Loki had kept it up for too long.

Tony dreaded to think that Loki would stop coming down here.

Loki stopped just shy of Tony's computer. He bit his lip for a second before turning to Tony with wild eyes. "I need you to fix my computer."

Tony could've laughed, he was so relieved. "No problem," he said, reaching out to take it. Loki didn't extend his hand. He only guarded the laptop more, turning his body away from Tony's outstretched hand.

"I have a major presentation in an hour," Loki said.

Tony sat up, almost knocking over the ramen cup beside his elbow. "The trade deal, right?" Loki nodded. "What's wrong with your computer?"

"It keeps shutting itself down and giving me error messages. I've tried fixing it."

"Okay," Tony said, reaching for it again.

“The presentation is in an hour,” Loki repeated.

Tony huffed out a breath, rolling his eyes. “Are you going to let me look at the thing or not? I can’t fix it when you’re holding it.”

Loki didn’t move.

He’d been going on about the presentation for weeks, so Tony could understand the panic. Still. He kind of needed to have the computer to fix it. “I’ll take good care of it, precious.”

Loki relaxed a fraction at the nickname, snapping out of whatever thought he was in the middle of. “I need it back as soon as you fix it.”

“I’ll fix it right now,” Tony said. Reluctantly, Loki placed it in his hands.

“I have to go back upstairs,” Loki said, eyes lingering on the computer.

“I’ll fix it,” Tony promised. “Don’t worry about it.” Loki nodded his head slightly. He ran his fingers over his cuff. “What’s your password?”

Loki balked. He seemed to realize that though, because he quickly tried for a neutral expression as his hand reached to fiddle with his tie.

“I won’t look at your porn,” Tony teased him. The taller man faintly blushed. Tony held in a laugh.

Loki let out a hissy breath. “There are sensitive company files on there, Tony. I don’t want you to get into trouble.” Tony gave him a dead stare. He could look at anything the company did digitally, anytime he wanted. He was *good* at his job, even if he didn’t have to do it most of the time. “Just fix it and call me when it’s done, alright?”

Tony crossed his arms over his chest. “Password?”

Loki glanced away, then back at him. He fought with himself for a moment before reaching inside of his suit, withdrawing a business card and a fancy ass pen. Loki scribbled across the card.

“Here,” he said, setting it face down. A teeny, tiny part of Tony hoped that it was more than a password. That Loki was giving him something like his number, even though Tony already had that. “Call me when it’s done,” Loki reminded him.

“I’ll work as fast as I can,” Tony said, taking the card.

Loki tweaked his tie again, attention lingering on the laptop. “It’ll be ready in time for your presentation,” Tony promised him. “Stop worrying about it.”

Loki only nodded his head before taking a hesitant step back. Then he righted his shoulders and raised his chin, heading for the door with the same arrogant swagger that Tony had grown to love.

He flipped over the business card, clinging to the hope that it’d be something special.

It was just a long chain of random numbers and letters. Tony let out a sigh. He got to work.

Tony had said that he wouldn’t look at Loki’s porn, but the fix had taken less than ten minutes and he was kind of...curious, alright? He was curious. So curious.

It had only taken Tony a moment to realize that this wasn’t a company computer. This was Loki’s

personal computer.

And suddenly the weird behavior...well what could it be, except that Loki had something he didn't want Tony to see? Okay, it could be that Loki was nervous about the presentation. But it could also be that Loki was hiding something of mythical proportions. Something awesome. Tony's fingers hovered over the keyboard.

Snooping through Loki's files was a hundred percent wrong. There was no way around it. It was wrong.

But he could be bad sometimes, right?

Tony bit his lip.

He'd just look at the porn files. Just see what Loki would be into if they, you know, had a relationship. If Loki had liked him. Fuck. He knew it was wrong, it was so wrong, but he wanted to know. In one impulsive click, Tony opened the folders, looking over the usual suspects for the right one. Boom.

Tony clicked open the first image.

It was a short haired brunette man, posing naked across an expensive leather couch. The photo was kind of tame, considering. Tony closed it and went for the next one. Another short haired brunette, this time with a close up of his face, the lighting flattering his brown eyes and slight stubble. Man, it didn't exactly surprise him that Loki's stash was artsy, but come on. The next file was a pdf.

Tony gave it a cursory glance, confirming that there were in fact throbbing members and tongues battling for dominance before he closed it.

The next one was of the brunette from before bent over a couch, face frozen in ecstasy as a headless man penetrated from behind.

Disappointed, Tony sat back. It sort of seemed like Loki had saved a bunch of porn stock photos at once. It wasn't as exciting as he'd hoped.

There were hundreds of files in the folder. A large portion of them were pdfs and word documents. He glanced at the clock. Tony definitely couldn't read or get through all of it, and he didn't like Loki stressing out over his presentation.

He made the second bad decision of the day.

He copied the folder, tucking the USB away before texting Loki.

"It works?" Loki asked, rounding in on the desk with quick steps.

"Yeah. It works." Tony held out the laptop. Loki grasped it as Tony let go, quickly wiping his sweating palm against his jeans. "Let me know how the presentation goes, alright?"

Loki held the laptop against his chest. "I will," he promised. "Thanks," he said, voice strained as he looked past Tony to the clock on the wall. He started for the door.

"Knock 'em out," Tony called from his desk. Loki raised a hand in goodbye at the encouragement, half lost in his thoughts in that familiar way Tony had grown to love.

Tony bit down on both lips. He had a secret copy of Loki's porn stash. He was a shit friend. He was a shitty, shitty friend, and he had no business doing this.

But maybe looking at just one more file was okay, right?

He'd already sort of done the thing. What difference did one more file make?

This time he went for the first word doc. It opened at the bottom of a file, the cursor blinking back at him from the last line.

Tony read it, then felt his heartbeat pounding in his ears. He stared at the screen, frozen.

Tony's spine bowed back in pleasure, crying my name as thick stripes of cum from his engorged cock painted his chest.

Chapter End Notes

This work cannot be taken and posted onto other sites. It has been locked to ao3 users only due to such.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony pressed his hand against his mouth. He scratched his fingers against his sculpted beard. He took a deep breath. Loki was late.

His “smoke break” was supposed to have happened twenty minutes ago.

So either he was out to lunch with the rest of the top floor to celebrate, or something was wrong. It was probably the first. Knowing Loki, it was the first. He was the most meticulous, crafty person that Tony knew. Of course he nailed his presentation. And yet, Tony couldn’t shake the uneasy feeling.

Probably because he’d been looking through that folder.

Okay, it was a hundred percent because he’d been looking through that folder.

He’d read through all of Loki’s...what was he supposed to call it? Erotic friend fiction? Tony breathed out a laugh, anxiously standing to pace on the ratty office carpet.

He’d only read the one document, and there were more, but Tony wasn’t sure what to do. What to think. He’d looked at the pictures instead.

Nearly all of them were shots with the head cropped out, in artsy angles with dramatic lighting. Except for the brunette model. There’d been more of him. It seemed odd that Loki had so many, Tony thought as he ran his fingers through his brunette hair.

Tony’d had the balls to click on some of the pdfs, but it didn’t seem that Loki had written them. First of all, they didn’t have Tony and Loki as their main characters. Like the other file did. The file that Tony had read. The file that he had definitely, absolutely read.

He tugged at his hair, eyes darting to the clock again.

Loki was thirty minutes late now.

It was probably safe to say he wouldn’t be showing up for his break. Tony took a deep breath. Some of the other word docs were probably written by Loki. He sort of wanted to read them.

But he was already in so deep.

But alright. Great news. Loki definitely wanted to bone him, if the filthy smut Tony had read meant anything. But how the hell was Tony supposed to bring it up?

“Oh, hey, hi, so remember when you left me your computer and told me not to snoop and then I completely did and found your self-insert erotica? And I’ve kind of been nursing a crush on you for ages so, yes, I’d like that thing you wrote to happen?”

“Just so you know, I’m hypothetically up for this highly specific scenario that just happens to be the exact same as an erotica starring us that you wrote?”

“I didn’t know you were into fucking me against the couch that’s in the middle of the room?”

Who was he kidding? Loki would flay him if he found out.

But, still. After months of seeing no signs from Loki and trying to tamper down his heartache, Tony found out that he had a shot with Loki. That Loki *wanted* him. It made Tony all soft and floaty in an embarrassingly lovesick way.

Well if Loki wasn't coming down for his break, Tony could at least read another. He sunk back down into his computer chair, pulling up the folder.

The door slammed open.

Tony startled forward, frantically closing the tab with shaky fingers. Loki strode in, seething.

Fuck. He knew, he fucking knew—

“Thor,” Loki bellowed. Oh, thank fuck. Not him, then. “Is an unimaginative imbecile.” Loki walked into the center of the room, ignoring Tony as his eyes burned a hole into the cluster of wires hanging from the ceiling. “I gave an hour long presentation and all the asshole had to do was rephrase what I’d fucking said at the end to be lauded like a...”

Tony swallowed down hard.

Okay, Loki was kind of hot when he was on a tirade. One not directed at Tony, of course. The domineering bravado that he spoke in sent a heat scattering across Tony’s skin. Not to mention he had those nice, sharp cheekbones.

“I swear,” Loki gritted out, “if I get my hands on that sniveling middle manager...”

Tony sank beneath me as I pressed his broad shoulders to the couch, slotting my knee between his trembling legs. “Please,” Tony moaned out, cheeks painted crimson by the passion of unfettered lust. “Loki. I need you so much.”

“...not to mention the gross domestic product...” Loki’s voice echoed off the walls. He had taken up to pacing where Tony had been not too long ago. He didn’t spare Tony a glance, just took his audience as granted.

Which was for the best, really, because Tony couldn’t stop what he’d read from flooding his brain.

I parted his cheeks, grasping the soft flesh as his slicked pink hole stretched greedily for me, glistening and wet. I plunged into the tight heat of him, Tony’s cries ringing in my ears. He begged me for more, shouting my name, as I fucked him into the cushions with wild abandon.

Loki yanked at the knot in his tie, loosening it in his fury. “Our investors will not be charmed with simple...”

I pulled the tie from my neck, resolute that my burning desires would not seize the glory from the fantasies of my mind on our second encounter. My tie encircled Tony’s head like a silk serpent as I shrouded his vision in darkness, the wayward strands of Tony’s brown hair bending pliantly beneath my fingertips. I pressed at the gentle curve of his lips, thrilled at the moan that rewarded me. This time I would savor every inch of him...

“...for once in this god damn company, I am not going to...” Loki turned on his heel, sharply pacing in the other direction. The soft groan of leather from his footfalls sent a shudder down Tony’s spine.

I yearned to see the expression in Tony's gorgeous brown eyes at the patternless teasing of the riding crop as it trailed along his skin, prodding rosy nipples to bloom, their hardened buds yearning for the daring snap of leather. His thick cock stood erect, weeping at its inability to be satisfied.

"...don't you think, Tony?"

Tony blinked. Loki was staring expectantly at him, as livid as ever. Think, Tony, think. "Thor's a bastard."

Satisfaction spread across Loki's features as Tony apparently had said the right thing. Loki rolled back his sleeve, checking his watch. "I suppose my smoke break is over," he said. "I'd better go before anyone feels a desire to look for me."

"Try not to kill anyone," Tony said.

Loki grinned at him. "No promises," he said with the first cheer that Tony'd seen all day. His toothy grin hit Tony in all the right spots. Tony tried to smile back convincingly.

Loki headed for the door with the same arrogant swagger as always, but this time Tony found himself letting out a wistful sigh.

"No. You need to come up here." Loki's secretary was on the line, insulted that Tony had suggested resetting the computer first. Tony held the old corded phone to his ear, grimacing. Sure, yeah, he did actually venture upstairs sometimes, but he'd never been called to Loki's office before. "The desktop isn't working and it won't connect to the network. We need you in the next five minutes."

"I'm on my way." She hung up on him. Tony drew in a shaky breath. It was too much of a coincidence. What if Loki somehow knew that he'd gotten the files now? It was possible that both of Loki's computers had broken in the same day, but that couldn't be it, right? Tony didn't know what Loki was planning, but he was certain that this was Loki's planning. Maybe Loki had planted the files as an elaborate confession. Maybe Loki was in his office, waiting to see Tony's reaction.

Tony opened his camera, using it to sheepishly fix his hair. Maybe he shouldn't be wearing hoodies to work, but no one had ever complained. He was the youngest person in the company, so maybe they didn't care. He took a deep breath.

He really, really hoped that Loki was about to confess his undying love. Or something like that.

The elevator ride was long and uncomfortable. Tony recognized most of the faces that got in, but they didn't know his. By the time that Tony reached the top of the tower, he was the only one.

Tony hadn't been in the penthouse before. He squinted in the blinding natural light. Loki's secretary curled her lip as Tony approached the desk. "Mr. Stark," she said. "This way," she said, rising from her desk.

Jealousy unfurled in Tony's chest as he watched her get up from the desk, a perfectly tailored suit clinging to her gorgeous form as she rose. He wondered if Loki had slept with her.

She lead him to a desktop computer in an adjacent corner office. It was empty, so at least there was that. Tony felt safe once he was seated in the computer chair.

He looked around for a sign of Loki. In the distance, he could hear heavy male voices talking at length about something. The office itself was generic with nothing personal on display, just imposing bookshelves and expensive furniture. Tony bit his cheek, turning the computer on. The secretary was keeping an eye on him from the open door.

He thought about looking for another stash, but it wasn't appealing when he was so tense. He got to work.

The fix was simple. He kind of sort of absolutely blamed the secretary for it. She'd probably fucked up the settings with her perfect manicured nails and her stupid tight ass. Tony was just about to get up and leave when Loki strode in, carrying an armful of manilla folders.

Loki gave him nothing other than a cursory glance. "Is it working?" He asked, attention on the papers he was flicking through.

"Yeah."

"Excellent." Loki withdrew some papers from a file, seating himself in the chair that Tony had just evacuated. He didn't look up. Tony stood awkwardly beside the desk.

"I fixed the connectivity issue."

"Good." Loki clicked on something. If Tony hadn't been standing right there, he would've thought that Loki was entirely alone in his office. He was...he was supposed to say something. He'd written all that stuff and he was just sitting there like Tony was invisible. The mouse clicked. Tony tore his gaze away and found Loki's secretary waiting to catch his eye. She raised her perfectly fixed eyebrows in a cue to get out.

Tony took a self-conscious step towards the door. Still clinging to one last scrap of hope, he looked back over his shoulder as he left, but Loki was no more interested in his presence than before.

The secretary gave him a fake smile as Tony went to leave. Through the glass windows behind her, Tony saw Thor and Odin seated across from each in a common area. They were gesturing at something, the sweeping windows beyond showing off the sprawling city below them. Tony sighed. He didn't belong here. Maybe there was a reason that Loki had kept his desires hidden from Tony.

The ride down was way worse than the one up. Maybe he was just a hot piece of ass to fantasize about and a place to hide. Tony leaned back against the elevator wall, trying to ignore the prickling heat at his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Loki writing fic is canon ;) : [here in Loki:AoA #1](#)

Chapter 3

Loki arrived the next morning at his usual time, strutting in like nothing had changed.

Except this time he wasn't blinded by a rant, and this time his attention went straight to the bags under Tony's bloodshot eyes and Tony's unflattering slouch as he propped himself up with an elbow. Loki said nothing as he approached, studying him. Tony sipped his soda, not bothering with a hello.

"Did you go out last night?" Loki asked, voice friendly and curious. Tony shook his head, giving more attention to Reddit headlines than Loki. "Are you *certain* you're not hung over?" There was teasing in Loki's voice, and yet, Tony didn't react.

"I'm fine." Tony's eyes darted across the lines of text, not comprehending.

He couldn't tell what Loki was doing out of the corner of his eye, just that Loki was hovering over his desk.

"Did your father call again?"

That startled Tony out of his obstinate withdrawal. "No." He'd only heard from that bastard once since he'd been kicked out of the house, and Tony wasn't going to take his damn call again if he did try.

Tony rubbed his nose. "I just have a lot of work to do," he said, wishing that Loki would leave.

"You do not," Loki said, knowing Tony's position down here all too well. Tony bit his lip but didn't look up.

For a moment they were silent. Tony stared resolutely at the computer screen, not daring to move. He knew Loki was staring at him, judging and calculating in that dizzyingly clever way he had, but Tony didn't know how to get out of it.

"What's wrong?"

Tony set his jaw, daring a glance up at Loki.

Loki's voice had been gentle by Loki standards, but the intensity in his eyes was too much. Tony went back to the computer screen.

Loki turned away from the desk, adjusting his tie. Then he fiddled with his cufflink. Tony pretended to be enraptured with his reading as Loki twisted the cufflink back and forth. Abruptly, Loki spun back around. "Are you mad that I didn't talk to you in my office yesterday?" It showed on his face, Tony couldn't help it. He tried staring at the screen like he hadn't given himself away. "Tony," Loki practically cooed. "Tony," he sounded so much lighter. "You know I can't talk to you upstairs. If my father and brother knew I spent all my time down here with you when I'm supposed to be lighting up in the alleyway somewhere, I wouldn't be able to see you anymore."

Tony's eyes darted to Loki. He didn't want that. He didn't want Loki to stop coming. Loki smiled at him, his eyebrows bowing in sympathy. "I don't want you to lose your job, Tony."

Tony's mouth fell open to say something, then shut. He had kind of known all of that already. He picked at the frayed edge on his hoodie, feeling like an idiot. Loki was smiling at him when Tony

glanced up. There was tenderness in that smile, in that smile that Tony so rarely saw. He felt himself falling for Loki again.

“Okay,” Tony said because what else could he say?

“There’s no need to get so worked up about it,” Loki said, humor in his voice again. “Or did you want my father and brother to see us chatting and figure it out? Ooh, maybe you wanted Thor to come down here and hang out with us instead?”

Tony found himself sort of smiling at the teasing. “No,” Tony said. He’d heard enough of Loki’s rants on his brother to have a very biased opinion. “I’m good.”

Loki patted his arm.

Loki never did that. The closest he got was just a fraction closer than normal and that was only when he sat at the desk and stole sodas from Tony’s mini fridge. Loki must’ve been really relieved.

“How’d uh, how’d the presentation turn out?” Tony asked.

Loki dimmed a bit, leaning back. “Oh,” he said. “The deal is going through the way I wanted. That is what matters.” They both knew he was lying. Loki wanted the credit as much as Thor got it.

“Good,” Tony said, thinking about the folder again. He hadn’t been in the mood to look at it last night.

Loki checked his watch, then let out a sigh. “If you’re called upstairs or we see each other in the hall, don’t take it so personally again. I don’t want our association to jeopardize your place here.” He glanced at Tony, expectant.

“I know.” It felt like a promise.

Loki half smiled, but there was concern in his expression. “When I own the company, things will be different.” Tony hadn’t heard him talk about that before. Loki didn’t elaborate. He simply watched Tony for a moment longer before he left like always.

Tony smelled fresh coffee before he heard Loki’s familiar footsteps.

Loki strode in carrying a large Starbucks cup. His eyes wandered over the dimly lit assortment of spare computer parts piled up on shelves and in boxes. He stopped in front of Tony’s desk, setting the coffee down. Right beside Tony’s hand.

There was a crinkling sound, and then Loki was setting a brown paper pastry bag down by it. “Are these for me—” Tony started.

“—You looked tired,” Loki said, as if it was nothing.

Tony stared at the small gift, feeling like he wanted to cry. He coughed, clearing his throat. “Thanks.”

Loki walked around his desk, grabbing the spare chair and sliding it up beside Tony. He propped his feet up on the desk and folded his hands in his lap. “What’re you doing this weekend?” Loki asked. Tony reached for the coffee. It smelled incredible. “Do you have a date?”

Tony’s hand stilled on the coffee cup. Thank god he hadn’t taken a sip. He’d be coughing it up

everywhere. “No,” he said. Shit, he sounded weird. Normally he did talk about going out on dates, yeah that was true, but talking about it was also to show that he was cool because Loki hadn’t been interested in him, but Tony still wanted him to think he was cool and desirable, but now Tony knew Loki was interested, and he couldn’t be talking about a million dates and one night stands if it was going to kill his chances with Loki. “I’m single. Ve—very single. Not doing the whole—” Tony gestured with his hand. “Around...thing.” He rushed to take a sip of the coffee.

“Oh?” Loki seemed surprised, but Tony couldn’t bring himself to do anything but gulp down coffee. “Hadn’t you been seeing someone?” There was concern in the question, it was obvious.

Loki was worried about him breaking up with someone else? What was he, a fucking saint?

“Not, not seriously.” He hadn’t been seeing anyone seriously. “Just a date here or there, with people—different people, not the same one. What are you doing this weekend?” Tony asked, desperate to get the heat off of himself.

“Nothing.”

Loki brushed a piece of lint off of his shoulder. Maybe, maybe Tony could invite him to do something. Maybe he should?

Just the thought made Tony’s heart beat faster.

“Did you watch last night’s episode?” Loki asked. The sudden familiarity was comforting.

“Yes! I was coming up with my own way to win the heist. I can’t believe I didn’t see the end coming. It was great.”

“The cold open was wonderful—” Loki’s phone buzzed in the middle of his response. Loki withdrew it from his jacket and gave the text a cursory glance. “I have gone far over my break,” Loki said with some amusement. “They need my help.” He rose, straightening his jacket. “Have a nice weekend, Tony.”

“You too,” Tony said awkwardly.

Loki walked to the door, but unlike usual, he turned back to glance at Tony before leaving. Although Tony tried, he couldn’t read anything in the brief moment. He felt better though.

After Loki left, Tony scarfed down the loaf cake that Loki had given him. He stared at the empty wrapper. Tony folded it into perfect squares, carefully lining the edges. Then, on an impulse, he tucked it away in his desk drawer.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony rolled back and forth in his computer chair, enjoying the squeak of the wheels. He dug his fingernails beneath the stiff, scratchy collar of his dress shirt, seeking relief from the starched fabric.

He'd been thinking about it, and maybe he needed to dress up a little for work. Like Loki did.

There might also have been a scene in Loki's files that involved tearing a dress shirt off of Tony so that the buttons went everywhere. That might have had something to do with it.

Tony checked his hair. He'd worked on getting the gel just right. He guessed that he looked good. Really, he just felt like a prop for Howard again, but whatever. Even if these clothes made him feel like he was being the son that Howard wanted him to be, he hoped that Loki would like them. Tony puffed his cheeks and then let the breath out, wriggling the chair wheels back and forth again. He watched the door.

Loki came in on time as usual, casually striding in until he caught sight of Tony. He did a double take. Then he squinted. "Tony?"

"The one and only," Tony said, even more uncertain at the incredulity in Loki's voice.

Loki had swallowed that down by the time he reached the desk. "I didn't recognize you at first," Loki said. "I thought you might've been out today and someone was subbing for you."

Tony twiddled his thumbs under the desk. "Just me." He smiled.

One eyebrow sank with puzzlement. "Do you have a meeting today?"

"No," Tony said. "Just thought I'd try something new." Loki frowned, thinking. "I'm not sure I was meeting dress code," he confessed.

Loki rolled his eyes, not looking at Tony as he spoke. "Your old look was fine. You won't be judged like—" Loki stopped himself. His lips pinched down into a subtle grimace that was hard to catch. He smoothed the front of his tie down against his chest. "How was your weekend?"

"Fine." Tony leaned back in his chair as Loki studied a wall calendar that was three months behind. "How about you?"

"You didn't do anything?" Loki asked.

He'd ordered in pizza and read through a couple more of Loki's files. And played video games. That'd sound lame, though. "I went out," Tony said. "Met some people. What'd you do?"

It took Loki a moment to answer. He seemed a little scatter brained today. There had to be a lot going on upstairs. "Read." He turned around to go back towards the door.

"You still have ten minutes left," Tony said. At least. "Where're you going?"

"I have to run an errand," Loki said absently. He was gone before Tony thought to say goodbye. Tony loosened his tie, considering taking it off, but left it on anyway. He'd thought that Loki

would get something out of seeing him in the shirt. It was just his luck that he'd picked a day when Loki was distracted by whatever he was plotting for upstairs. Sighing, Tony opened the file he'd started last night.

I steered my bold and brilliant steed back towards the castle. I endeavored to make haste before the setting sun, lest my sabotaging of Prince Golden's coronation become known. The soldiers were in place now, their orders absolute. All I had to do was wait until the morning.

Tony skimmed down the page a little further, hoping to see his name. Loki's medieval adventure was dozens of chapters long, and it had been a while since his character had appeared. His character hadn't gotten any action either. He'd just admired Loki from afar. Tony was trying not to be irked about that. Oddly, Loki had only used his own name and Tony's. Everyone else had code names, although it was pretty easy to work out who they were supposed to be.

I stood beside my brother, elated not for his victory, but my own. With the truth of his anemic ability laid bare for all to see, I would step into the light of absolute leadership. With a just ruler, the land would be free to...

Loki really wanted to be in charge of the company, if this story was what Tony thought it was. He skimmed down a little further.

"Our beloved king. It has been many generations since we have venerated the likes of a ruler so wise, so benevolent. You have freed us from the tyranny of mediocrity, of short sighted subservience to the habits of glory days many years dead..."

Tony strained not to roll his eyes. He needed to take Loki to a Shakespeare in the park thing. The guy would love it. Or Tony would just be really amused and Loki would have no idea why, but he had heard that it was acceptable to bring wine to those things so it'd be fine. He skimmed through the King Loki love fest, expecting five more ego fluffing chapters.

*I crept away from the weight of the throne, down winding corridors kept company only by faint torches, seeking the other half of my heart. Stark's chambers were still lit at the late hour. No matter how many times Tony found himself in the story, he got excited like it was the first time. And "other half of my heart"? Tony was grinning like a love sick idiot and he knew it. *I rapt upon the door, holding my breath. I knew not whether the man would wait for me, and yet now, perhaps I had a chance.**

Stark answered the door with ruffled hair, and I, in my fear, glanced over his bare shoulder to the bed behind him, dreading the sight of a lover. Finding it empty, I smiled in sheer relief. The room provided refuge only to the panoply of parts that comprised the smith's unique contraptions.

"My king," Stark said. "To what do I owe such an honor—"

The man stepped back as I made my way in, waiting for the click of the door behind us.

"Honorable Anthony. In times past, my role as prince curtailed my capacity to make my interest known."

"Your interest in me—" Anthony began, his cheeks turning a rosy pink. I held up my hand, lacking faith in my conviction to finish should I allow those soft lips to beguile me.

"Yes." I dared take a step towards him, if only to relish the darkening upon his cheeks. "I know you may think only of me as a confidant, but I have come to desire more. Your wit, your humor,

your kindness—all astound me. Anthony Stark, I should like very much to court you in earnest. If you will have me.”

“Loki,” Anthony cried, forgetting my title. “I had thought my status beneath you. My king, if you only knew how fantasies of your countenance kept me warm on cold, lonely nights.” He stepped forward, nearly trembling, his excitement too great. “There is no need to court me when I would so gladly give you all of myself and allow your hands upon me to take as they pleased.”

“You are far too precious to be robbed of the courting you are worthy of.” I smiled, daring to extend a hand and brush the enraptured smith’s hair back from his soft eyes.

To my surprise, Anthony grasped my cloak, pressing our chests flush together. “My king,” Anthony pleaded. “You cannot conceive how I have longed for this.” He pressed upon his toes to bring his lips closer to mine.

“That I might,” I muttered, bending down to grant his request.

His soft lips yielded to mine, a wanton cry breaking free of him. Desperate hands pulled at my cloak, drawing me towards the bed. I shoved him upon the mattress, eager to have him, thoughts of a rightful courtship delayed by a desire too long unanswered.

Tony needed to get up and take a walk. Maybe get some ice. Maybe do some coding and not melt into a daydream.

Loki was late for his break. Tony went and laid down on the couch, debating.

If he just confessed, would Loki react the way he had in the story?

Tony rubbed his chin. The Loki in the stories was a bit different than the Loki he knew. And sometimes in them Loki just ripped his clothes off and fucked him, without the lovey diatribes but with all the adjectives. Besides, Tony knew that Loki hadn’t written the stories for Tony to see.

Why’d he have to read them?

Well if he hadn’t read them, he’d have no idea that Loki wanted to fuck him like mad, but since he had read them, he knew. He just didn’t know how to bring it up. Aaaaaand it made him into a huge asshole. Unless he didn’t tell Loki, which still made him an asshole, but at least not an asshole that Loki was going to murder.

He was lost in thought when he heard Loki’s footsteps. When he *smelled* Loki.

Tony sat up, bewildered.

The noxious odor of cigarette smoke was coming off the guy in waves. Loki brushed his hair back as he came to stand beside Tony at the couch.

“I thought there were fakes in those packs,” Tony thought aloud. Loki was a vain bastard. Tony knew that he’d hated for the smell to ruin his precious suits, let alone cling to him and suppress his cologne’s fine scent. “You’d better be careful,” Tony teased. “No one wants to make out with an ashtray.”

Loki’s rather surly expression changed for a second, his eyes darting to Tony. “I ran out of the fakes,” he said coldly. He crossed his arms over his chest. Loki sat down on the arm of the couch,

but it only made him seem vulnerable. Tony didn't feel right teasing him anymore.

In fact, he felt sort of sorry because he hadn't meant to upset Loki, and Loki didn't seem to be in a good mood. "So uh, we didn't get to finish talking about the show," Tony said. "Do you think the wedding will be the season finale? I also looked up what would happen if you did eat six GPS trackers."

Loki raised his eyebrows for Tony to continue.

"I wouldn't recommend it," Tony said.

There was a slight twitch of fond amusement in Loki's lips, but then he just looked unhappier. "I'll have to keep that in mind."

Loki rubbed his nose, standing up with an expressive sigh that felt pointed and unhappy. Tony knew nothing bad had been said. Yet, he still felt like he'd fucked up.

"Your break was really short," Tony said, desperate to fill the silence with something.

"When you use your smoke break for smoking, that tends to happen."

Tony went to pull on a hoodie string, only to find it wasn't there. He needed to do something nice, like Loki had for him. And he needed to think fast because Loki was just about to start for the door. "Do you want to take a couple of my sodas with you? Or a ramen cup?"

One of Loki's sardonic smiles flicked across his lips before he smothered it. "No, thank you. Have a nice day, Tony."

"You too," Tony said, chest filling with mild dread as Loki left.

He hopped up. Tony raked his fingers through his hair, ruining the effect he'd worked so hard to achieve. Why did it feel like things with Loki were getting harder? And not in the good way?

Tony let out a groan. Focus.

So, recap. He'd talked about what he was wearing and then he'd...

Fuck. He'd told Loki he'd met people. It was just a habit to sound cool and he'd forgotten not to do it. Already. He needed to get it together.

Wait. What if, what if Loki thought he didn't have a chance with Tony and decided to see other people? Tony twisted back to stare at the computer. Yeah, Loki had clearly written that stuff. But did it mean anything if he started seeing other people? If he thought Tony was seeing other people? Because that'd been his fear in the story, right? Shit. And Loki was the hottest man in the whole building.

And he had that stupid hot secretary. What if Loki was upstairs in the company's official break room for once, letting everyone throw themselves at him? He could be getting dates right now. Tony glanced at the clock. It was the end of Loki's official break. But Loki stretched that. Sometimes. And that stupid hot secretary was around him all the time. Tony ran to his desk, snatching his phone out of the clutter.

He couldn't just sit here and let this chance pass him up. Them up. He needed to do something right now before Loki found someone else.

Do you want to catch a movie after work?

Tony stared at the text. Nothing happened.

He waited. He waited long enough to ask himself what the hell he'd been doing. He was too impulsive. A half hour went by, and he'd pretty much given up, sitting at his desk and working when Loki strode in. He approached Tony's desk with suspicion. "Did you text me to see a movie after work?" He asked with guarded caution.

"Yeah." Tony smiled, trying to put them both at ease. The adrenaline rocking through him was making it difficult. "I don't know what's playing, but I thought it'd be fun to hang out."

"Who else is coming?"

"I—thought just us," Tony said, wondering if Loki would prefer other people to come. It wasn't exactly like they'd seen each other outside of work.

The abrupt joy on Loki's face was dizzying. "How about at six?" He asked. "I can meet you at the cinema closest to here."

"Okay." Tony couldn't believe this was happening. That is was actually fucking happening today.

Loki smiled broadly, then quickly tampered it down, going for something warm but neutral. "I have to be upstairs. See you at six, Tony."

"I'll be there."

There was a bounce in Loki's step as he hurried back to the door. Tony slumped in his chair, letting the adrenaline wear off. Wow.

He'd actually—he'd actually set this up. Tony could hardly believe himself, or how giddy he felt. How relieved he felt.

Wait. He needed to change into something else after work, since this look was a flop. Tony turned to the folder for inspiration.

Chapter End Notes

Tony, you kind of forgot to specify it's a date~.

Chapter 5

Tony dug his hands into his jacket pockets, bracing himself against the wind. It was deserted outside the theater. The kid at the ticket window diligently ignored him as Tony shifted restlessly on his feet.

Tony had been so anxious about being on time that he'd gotten there fifteen minutes early. He'd also gotten dressed in a rush, but it had helped that he'd had a plan. He'd gone with the hairstyle that the brunette model had in all of the photos with his hair coaxed into a messy wave of slight curls on top.

He'd ditched the business attire for the Black Sabbath shirt that Loki had mentioned in not one, but three different stories. Then he'd grabbed his cleanest pair of jeans and hoped for the best.

Tony was so busy fretting that it took him a moment to recognize the footsteps crunching along the gravelly sidewalk.

Loki smiled at him, the wind blowing his sleek black hair back from his face. He wore a white button up oxford with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. A vibrant emerald tie caught in the wind. Loki tucked his hands into his black dress slacks' pockets.

Tony swallowed.

Besides the obvious fact that Loki had gone home and changed, he smelled wonderful. The warm, sensual cologne scent was unlike his usual in that there was something slightly bright in it, some sort of citrus that was catching Tony's attention and making him realize he'd memorized the guy's scent.

Loki's eyes flickered down to his t-shirt, but then they were right back on Tony's face again. "What movie are we seeing?"

"Uhh—" Tony had kind of had enough time to realize that everything that was showing kind of sucked. "Our options are a werewolf thing or a documentary on yarn making," he said with chagrin.

Loki stared at the marquee, surprisingly pleasant. "Werewolf thing it is, then." He stepped up to the counter, buying their tickets and hushing Tony's indignant squeak offering to pay. "You can get the popcorn," Loki soothed him as Tony held the door open for them.

They were the only ones in the theater. It was a small place on a weeknight showing a kitschy film, so it wasn't like that was surprising, but Tony still wished he'd done a better job planning. The lack of other people made it seem lame. Tony balanced the popcorn bucket on the wooden armrest between them. The seats were made of old green velvet and the movie screen had heavy curtains draped on the sides with a row of antique lights down the isles.

"I can't remember the last time I went out to see a movie," Loki said over the ads. He was so light and relaxed. Tony wasn't sure he'd seen Loki like this before.

"Y'know, now that you mention it, I'm not sure when the last time I saw one was either." Did Loki know how good he looked, dressed up *and* happy like that? Tony wanted to grab his hand, just have some contact, any contact.

Loki crossed his legs, casually resting his ankle on his knee. "It was a great idea, then."

“Thanks,” Tony fumbled. The lights were starting to dim. “I’m glad you could come.” “Me too,” Loki said, and there was a smile in his voice that made Tony melt. Despite the awkwardness of the conversation, Tony felt happy. Loki diligently turned to the screen as the trailers started playing, but Tony lingered, watching the lights play across Loki’s face a few moments longer.

As Tony watched an actress climb through a window, he couldn’t help the hopeful anticipation that swept through him. Maybe Loki would put his arm around him, or better yet because he wasn’t a teenager out on date night, they could have fun in this very much still empty theater.

Fuck, Loki smelled good.

Tony shifted in his seat. He needed to take down the wall of popcorn between them. Grabbing the bucket, Tony set it in his lap, pretending that he’d wanted the arm rest.

No, that was weird. He took a handful of popcorn, pretending that’s what he’d wanted instead.

He dared a glance out of the corner of his eye. Loki was watching the film with the same sort of contentment as before. Tony bit down hard on a kernel.

Loki’s hand glided over, plucking a handful of popcorn. Tony held his breath. Nothing else happened. Loki plucked pieces of popcorn from his hand and took more as he pleased, smiling at Tony’s overeager attempts to bring the bucket closer to him.

Thirty minutes in, and that was the most exciting thing that had happened. The movie was definitively bad, but Loki wasn’t making whispered jabs at it so Tony wouldn’t. Maybe Loki liked it. He was happy, that much was obvious.

Tony’d also had time to realize that he kind of hadn’t told Loki that this was a date. As far as Loki knew, this was them out as friends. Which was fine, Tony realized. After all, Loki was his best friend.

Even if Tony hadn’t hung with him outside of work...did Loki know that Tony considered him his best friend?

Tony bit on his cheek.

It was just that they saw each other everyday, and Tony had been trying to be satisfied with that instead of making it harder on himself by spending even more time with the man he’d fallen in one sided love with. Except it wasn’t anymore. And Loki didn’t know that either.

Tony kind of just wanted to slam the popcorn bucket down on the floor and confess.

He glanced over again. Loki was sitting in his chair like a cat in a sun patch. The only way Tony would’ve known there was a werewolf tearing people apart on screen was by the slight wrinkle in Loki’s brows. That was it.

Tony let his head drop back against the seat. He’d just have to ride the movie out.

“That was interesting,” Tony said as they walked back outside. The wind tugged at his jacket.

Loki stared at him for a moment. “That’s a nice way to say terrible,” Loki dared, waiting for Tony’s reaction.

Tony managed a slight smile. “It was,” he agreed. Okay, were they both going to admit it?

Loki beamed at him, making Tony lightheaded. “It was one of the worst movies I’ve ever seen.”

“So the movie was a bad call?” Tony asked, wondering if he’d blown his shot.

“No. I had a wonderful time,” Loki exclaimed.

Tony was going to have a horrible time adjusting back to business Loki tomorrow. He liked this Loki a lot too. “You uh, you want to go and—” Tony’s heart pounded in his ears. “—and catch a movie again sometime?” He finished lamely, losing the nerve to ask Loki back to his place.

“Sure,” Loki warmly agreed. He was standing at a polite distance, and it was driving Tony crazy.

Loki didn’t know. How could Tony stand here when *Loki didn’t know*?

“Hey, uh,” Tony said quickly. “Next time, you want to go as a—” The butterflies in his stomach were going to burst out in a mass migration. “—a date?”

Loki stared at him. His eyes had gone wide, every other part of him absolutely still.

It wasn’t what Tony had expected, probably because story-Loki always professed beautiful poems and shit, but Tony was riding on adrenaline and time was getting all weird. “Like a date-date, since this one wasn’t but, you know, like a not friends date, but a—date-date?”

Loki blinked, coming back online with a warm joy that short circuited Tony. “Why can’t this be a date-date?” He asked, a clever grin breaking away to genuine happiness.

Tony stared at him, feeling the burning blush on his cheeks while his brain struggled to catch up. Loki leaned in, and suddenly those long fingers, chilled by the wind, were brushing up the back of his neck as Loki leaned in to kiss him.

It was better than any kiss that Loki had written.

His lips were soft and warm against Tony’s, so much more tender and affectionate than Tony had ever anticipated.

Tony held pliantly still, eyes closed as Loki’s hand slipped away. Loki was smiling at him, eyes brighter and happier than Tony had ever seen, when he blinked, realizing that Loki wasn’t there anymore. More than a little dazed, Tony could do nothing but stare at Loki with a besotted expression.

“So the second date is mine to choose?” Loki asked.

“Yeah,” Tony said. Sure, yeah, what. Tony leaned back in to kiss him.

Loki caught his shoulders, chuckling. “I will have to pick carefully.”

Tony stared at him in confusion. That was it?

Loki let go, his face a mixture of amusement and adoration. It was slightly infuriating. “I’ll see you at work tomorrow.”

“Just a kiss on the first date?” Tony asked. Loki raised his eyebrows slightly, only more amused.

“Wow. You are a classy—” Loki’s laughter cut him off. “Wait. Are you messing with me?”

Loki grabbed his jacket, pulling the fabric taut. For a split second, Tony thought Loki was going to rip it off like he did in his stories. Tony wanted that. “Keep your Saturday open.”

It was kind of hard to think when Loki’s hands were on him. “Okay,” he breathed out.

“I’ll see you at work tomorrow,” Loki said. There was a little bit of business in it, and a lot of the demanding, arrogant Loki that Tony knew so well. “My car is that way,” Loki nodded, about to leave.

Tony pointed feebly behind him. His car was in the other direction. “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” Loki agreed.

Loki gave him a pleased smile before walking down the sidewalk with a saunter that made Tony’s pants a little snug. He watched Loki stroll down the street until the cold and his frustration became too much. He turned around, both vexed and elated. Tony ran his finger over his bottom lip to assure himself he hadn’t been dreaming.

How was he going to make it all the way to Saturday?

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony had meant to wear something curated out of Loki's files for work, but he'd been running late and ended up wearing his usual. Tony walked around the IT department in an unusually good mood. He actually organized the shelves and made it a little less dungeon-like.

Tony breezed through his work for the day. He was called up to the third floor for a printer connection issue that took five minutes to solve, then eagerly rushed back before Loki's break.

He laid down on the couch to wait, giving up any pretense of working.

Loki strolled in a minute early, smiling. "I see it's a busy day down here," Loki remarked.

"I have no problems with getting busy," Tony leered.

For a split second, Loki stilled, blinking in surprise. Then a slow smirk at his impudence appeared, Loki turning his face away so that Tony could only appreciate his amusement in profile. "What are we, Thor and a new, young assistant?" Loki asked with obvious scorn for his brother. He turned to Tony with some fondness though when he said, "We're at work."

Tony knew right then that anything sexual here was off the table. He respected that. As much as he wanted what was in the files, he understood Loki's ambition, and contrary to popular belief, he had a sense of self preservation. "Besides," Loki said, sitting down on the part of the cushion that Tony's feet didn't quite reach, "I have no desire for us to get caught. You would certainly lose your job, Tony, and I wouldn't be able to do anything about it."

Tony gave him a soft smile to show he understood. Loki relaxed against the couch. He was wearing the same tie as last night, but Tony kind of missed the dressed down look. "So the rumor about Thor and the P.A. was true, huh?"

"Which one?" Loki asked.

He turned to Tony with some curiosity. "Well the one I've heard about was the blonde with the big boobs. Everyone said she was fired when they got caught," Tony said.

Loki let out a derisive huff. "Helen was fired because she was found embezzling that same week. It wasn't a clever method at all. She probably thought Thor would get her out of hot water, but he doesn't work in accounting or security." Loki wove his fingers together and set them against his neck, elbows pointed out as he rested his head. "He was caught with Jana in the supply closet, and being that it's a company violation, she was terminated and he was demoted. That was the nastiest one," Loki said with some enjoyment. "Father was furious because it put him in a difficult position, and it's not as if he could fire Thor. However, she was topless and Thor was still fully dressed, or so the story goes, so that was given as a reason for her harsher punishment." Loki glanced at Tony. "Though if everyone only remembers Helen, I suppose that scandal was kept a better secret than I thought."

Tony shrugged. "That's the only one I've heard about."

Tony thought Loki was done, but then he kept going. "He was much more careful the next time

with Lorena. They kept it quiet for about four months until she wanted to be out in the open about it and, clearly, he had learned his lesson, so she dumped him and took a better job at one of our competitors.” Loki smoothed his pant leg as if it had a crease. “Kelly was only an intern, so that was rather short lived. Laurel was fired for how she handled an account. He’d probably still be with Cleo if he hadn’t fallen in love with her. She only saw Thor as a fling and had career ambition, but Thor was—sentimental,” Loki decided. “When she got tired of his puppy dog eyes, she transferred to another branch and is doing quite well there.”

“I just can’t believe your Dad lets him do that.” There were plenty of rumors about Loki’s father. Loki’s father chewed people up and spit them out in pellets that could be sold to dog food manufacturers at a serious markup.

“Lets is the wrong word,” Loki said. “Thor has greatly improved at hiding his affairs, but my father also has a bit of a boys will be boys attitude reserved for Thor.” There was more than a little bitterness there.

Tony thought for a moment. Loki had never mentioned dating anyone at work. He’d never mentioned dating anyone, though Tony felt perfectly safe assuming that he had. “You haven’t slept with anyone from here?” Tony asked. He found that kind of hard to believe.

“I doubt my father would have a boys will be boys mentality towards me,” Loki said.

“Yeah, but secretly,” Tony said. “Like maybe your secretary?” He had to know.

Loki took a second to think before his eyes widened and he breathed out a laugh. “Sif?!” He exclaimed. His lip curled in a sneer. “No. Never.”

Tony’s eyes narrowed, suspicious. “Tony,” Loki chided. “You’ve met her?”

“Yeah,” Tony said.

Loki had seemed to think that was explanation enough. Tony crossed his arms over his chest, remembering her stupid perfect nails and her stupid perfect butt. “Sif enjoys exercising her authority,” Loki said. “Sleeping with the boss’s son would not give her the power rush she wants.” Tony pouted his lips. Loki let out a sigh. “No, Tony, I haven’t slept with her.” He got up to grab a soda from Tony’s fridge.

“So I’m the first one you’ve dated from the company?”

“Yes,” Loki answered, twisting open the soda top. He grinned. “Does that do something for you?” He asked with a suggestive lilt that made Tony look away.

“No. Just wondering.”

Loki hummed skeptically, chugging the soda as he walked back to the couch. Abruptly, Tony realized they were chatting like the friends they were, enjoying the back and forth between themselves.

And it struck him just as fast.

Loki was his best friend. What if this didn’t work out and he lost his best friend?

“What’s that look about?” Loki asked, drawing Tony’s attention back to him. There was real concern there.

Tony licked his lips. “I just—what if this doesn’t work out and we aren’t friends anymore?” Tony scratched at his hair. “I mean, people always say they’ll be friends if it doesn’t work out, but it wouldn’t go back to the way it was before, you know?” Tony wanted to tell him what he should’ve said last night. “You’re my best friend. I don’t want that to end.”

Loki’s entire expression softened. “You’re making it very hard to stick to my rules,” Loki muttered, mostly to himself, as he sat down. He twisted the soda cap back on, thinking. The plastic clicked against the bottle. “I’d rather take that chance,” Loki said. “Wouldn’t you?”

Tony stared into the clever green eyes that’d been giving him heartache for months. It was better to take the chance and know than to live with that hollow in his heart. “Yeah.”

“I enjoyed last night,” Loki said.

“Me too,” Tony said. Then the question he’d been wanting to ask since he’d driven home came tumbling out. “Why can’t our second date be tonight?”

Loki’s lips twitched up. “Tonight wouldn’t be nearly enough time for what I have planned.” Heat swept through Tony at the thought.

“What do you have planned?” Tony asked, hoping that his casual tone would pry the secret loose.

Loki glanced at him and then away again, a smile on the edge of his lips as he draped one arm over the back of the couch. “I suppose you’ll find out on Saturday.”

Tony sighed dramatically. “How am I supposed to get ready for it if I don’t even know what it is?”

“It’s not a test,” Loki said. “I’m going to pick you up. You don’t have to do anything.” Loki was going to pick him up? Tony hadn’t seen his car before. He was kind of excited.

“But what if it’s some fancy restaurant and I show up in my PJs?”

“I hope that you aren’t planning to show up for our second date in your pajamas,” Loki said.

Tony sat up straight, flustered. “I was just making a point.”

Loki shook his head. “Then I suppose you’ll get to find out what it feels like to eat filet mignon in your pajamas.” Loki breathed out a quiet laugh. “What you’re wearing now will be fine,” he reassured Tony. “It won’t be a black tie event.”

“What time?”

Loki had to consider that. “Ten thirty?”

“P.M.?”

“A.M.,” Loki said, like Tony was trying to be difficult.

“In the morning?” Tony asked, affronted.

Loki unwound the soda cap. “You wake up earlier than that for work everyday.”

“But I don’t work weekends,” Tony complained.

Loki took a swig of his soda. “Shall I move it back then?”

“No,” Tony said. He scratched at his chin. “Just appreciate that I’m getting up early for you.”

“Oh Tony, I’m *so* appreciative,” Loki said sarcastically, rising from the couch. He went to put the soda back in the fridge. Tony let out a wistful little sigh, quietly enough that Loki couldn’t hear it.

“That’d better be here when I get back,” Loki said, nodding towards his soda in the fridge.

“No promises,” Tony said.

“Typical,” Loki quipped back. As pulled open the door to leave, Tony watched him with a fond little smile on his face. Maybe he didn’t need to worry about losing his best friend, because this felt pretty damn good.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to @dls for the secretary as Sif idea. I'm really enjoying hearing everyone's reactions and the parts you liked! The second date is the next chapter. :)

Chapter 7

Tony sat with his face inches from the glass of his apartment window, looking out. He was on the first floor and had a good view of the street because of a seat built into the window ledge that he hadn't appreciated before now.

The apartment was clean for once. No empty pizza boxes piling up, no cans waiting to be recycled. The old carpet was vacuumed. The furniture he'd gotten from online second hand listings when he moved in was dusted and lacking spare computer parts for once. Tony had even put a nice candle and clean towels in the bathroom.

There was no guarantee that Loki would be coming inside his apartment, but Tony was hopeful. He hoped that the date went well and Loki would stay at his place afterwards. Maybe he'd make them breakfast in the morning. He knew how to make a good omelet.

He was wearing his favorite pair of jeans along with a cat t-shirt and the nicest casual jacket he owned. He didn't want to seem like he was trying too hard, even if he had spent a ridiculous amount of time getting his hair just right.

A sleek silver BMW pulled up outside, gracefully parallel parking. Tony leaned in against the glass. He couldn't see who was in the driver's seat. It was a moment before the door opened, and then Tony saw Loki. His heart picked up a couple beats.

Loki wore black dress slacks and a white button up oxford like last time, but his blazer gave off a casual impression that made the whole thing look cool. He'd skipped the tie. As Loki started up the sidewalk to his apartment, Tony hurried to get out the door.

Tony yanked open the front door of the main building, coming face to face with Loki. Loki raised an eyebrow. Tony smiled broadly. "Hey," he said. Loki's eyes trailed down him slowly before self-consciously snapping back up. "Am I underdressed—"

"—You look wonderful." Loki glanced pointedly behind Tony, grinning. "Is there something in your apartment that you don't want me to see?"

"No," Tony said.

"Really? Because meeting me at the door makes me think that it looks like a larger version of your desk."

Tony scowled as Loki laughed.

"Do you want to come in and see it?" Tony asked, ready to drag him in there to get that smug look off his face.

"No," Loki said, laughter still dancing in his eyes. He took a step back. "Let's get going." There was so much joy under the words that Tony couldn't help but follow after Loki with a little spring in his step.

"This is nice," Tony said as he got inside the car. "And I'm picky about cars."

"Are you?" Loki asked as his seatbelt made a harsh zipping sound. "I didn't know I was parking behind you when I pulled in."

Tony stared at the red sedan in front of them. It wasn't special, but Tony was going to have an amazing garage fleet someday. "How'd you know that's me?"

"The bumper stickers gave it away," Loki said as they pulled out. He had a point. The NASA and Star Trek stickers were telling. "I have to say, I am a little disappointed that you're not in your pajamas."

Tony threw a dirty look his way. "Maybe if you're good you'll get to see them."

Tony might've imagined it, but he swore Loki's hands gripped the steering wheel tighter when he said that. "It's hard to imagine that you have clean pajamas that aren't in the bottom of your laundry hamper," Loki said, voice teasing as usual.

"I do my laundry," Tony snarked right back.

"Are you certain?"

"Whatever. You probably have a closet full of the exact same suit like a cartoon character," Tony accused. To his surprise, Loki laughed.

"That's a good idea," he mused. "It would be so much easier to get ready in the morning."

"Where're we going?" Tony changed the subject, glancing up at the street signs at the intersection. They were headed further downtown.

"I thought we'd start with the art museum." The straightforward answer was unexpected. He'd figured that Loki would keep it a mystery until they arrived.

Tony considered it. Walking around, staring at art, it was laid back and—he turned to Loki with a huge grin on his face. "Look who's being romantic," he teased.

A faint blush appeared on Loki's cheeks before he gritted out, "Shove it, Tony."

"Where?"

Loki reached over and flicked Tony's shoulder all while keeping his eyes on the road. For a split second, Tony's heart stopped. It was contact again. Physical contact. He swallowed. "It'll be nice," Tony said, just to make it clear to Loki that he was on board with the idea. He didn't want Loki to doubt himself. "I haven't been in ages."

"Try not to make too many dick jokes in the sculpture gallery," Loki warned him.

"Well as long as I have a not-too-many quota, I think I'll do fine," Tony said. Loki shook his head, smirking.

Soft, natural light filtered in on the stone tiles of the art gallery. It was an impressive collection with more than the museum's fair share of van Gogh and Renoir. Tony followed a few steps behind Loki, careful not to bump into him every time that they stopped.

Tony had been required to take an art appreciation class in school, not that it had been a chore. He had no idea what Loki was thinking as he looked at the paintings, though. Probably something smart, knowing Loki.

Tony cleared his throat. "The contrast created with the bright palette draws attention to the

expression in the brushstrokes,” he said. “It’s a nice effect.”

Loki glanced over at him, a broad smile tugging at his lips as he lit up. There was a pause before he spoke, like he was trying to hold it all in. “I like the shade of blue,” he said, pointing towards the sky.

Tony glanced away with a smile, knowing that Loki knew he was trying too hard and teasing him for it.

“That’s nice too,” Tony conceded. They started for the next painting.

“Did I ever tell you that I painted in high school?” Loki asked.

“No.” Tony said. “Please tell me there are some really emo paintings lying around somewhere that I can find.”

Loki’s lips quirked up as he tilted his head to the side. “There is one of a garden hanging up over my mother’s desk in her study that I gave her for mother’s day. The...less saccharine ones were tossed by me ages ago.”

“Do you still paint?” Tony asked.

Loki shook his head. “I didn’t have time for it, studying to take on the business.” Voices echoed behind them as a new group of people entered the gallery. “I appreciate looking at them, but I haven’t felt the need to go back to making them.”

Tony slid his hands into his pockets. “Do you make anything else artsy?”

“No,” Loki said casually.

Tony followed him to a sculpture in the center of the gallery. “I kind of picture your apartment as a place with a lot of books. I could see you painting or writing or something.” Tony didn’t know why he was hinting at it. He just...he wanted Loki to bring it up so he could talk about it, crazy as that was.

“My apartment’s not a beatnik cafe if that’s what you’re implying,” Loki said.

“Kind of,” Tony said. His sneaker scuffed against the polished tile as he took a slight misstep.

“Without the bongo drums.”

“Thank goodness for that,” Loki said dryly.

As they turned the corner, Tony spotted a staircase. “Let’s go up there,” Tony said, walking past Loki. He climbed up the flight of stairs with childish wonder as he caught sight of the sculpture room. A handful of statues stood still as elegant veils of rippling marble draped from their curved forms.

Tony wandered, admiring the craftsmanship that had gone into the pieces. Loki drifted past him to the paintings on the walls. When Tony looked up, Loki was standing in front of the largest painting in the room.

It had a black background with a door cracked open. In the center a woman laid across a green chaise lounge, one pale arm resting over her forehead as she stared with a morose expression at a pile of papers on the floor. She held a dull orange book in her lap. Long black locks curled against the fabric behind her. Tony gave the doorway behind her a second glance. A man, presumably a

husband, stood in the shadows with a flushed face.

Tony didn't know what exactly it was about the portrait, but he was overcome by a wave of guilt.

Loki was standing off center, his black hair and dark attire similar to the woman's color scheme in the portrait. Tony tugged at his jacket sleeves. He rubbed the back of his neck. Would Loki still be on this date with him if he knew what Tony had done? Would they have ever gone on a date period if Tony hadn't looked?

Loki took a step towards the next painting, drawing Tony out of his thoughts.

"It'd be nice if the paintings at work were this skillful," Loki said. "I've always disliked the dull corporate abstracts."

"Yeah," Tony said, coming to stand beside him in the gallery. "They are pretty dull." He was obviously staring at the painting too hard, not seeing it.

"Do you think this looks like Thor?" Loki asked. Tony realized he was looking at a blonde man in sixteenth century dress. He did look somewhat like Thor.

"I think if you told him that it wouldn't go well," Tony said.

Loki laughed, moving on to the next painting. "Perhaps I should purchase it and have it hung in the break room for my amusement."

They continued like that throughout the gallery, casually pointing out the bits that interested them. Tony was perfectly content when they reached the end. He hadn't even started to think yet about what they were doing afterward when Loki turned to him with a grin. "Want to see what's next?"

Next turned out to be an arcade with a ton of vintage systems. Loki held up his own on the games and impressed Tony by beating him on a few. They'd been at it for quite a while when Tony noticed that bumper cars were in a connecting room.

"We're doing that," Tony said.

"What?"

Tony grabbed Loki's hand. "It'll be fun." Loki's feet quickly caught up, his hand slowly moving to hold Tony's in return until he held it in a gentle, almost cautious way. Tony had to let go when they got to the counter. Loki's facial expression hadn't changed, but the way it'd felt when he'd held back had already happily buried itself into Tony's brain.

Tony bought their passes and picked a double seated car for them. "Why am I not surprised that it's red?" Loki asked as he got in.

Grabbing the steering wheel with the same fervent love he'd had for his dad's best sports cars Tony answered, "Because red means it goes faster."

Loki made a skeptical sound as he tried to make his long legs comfortable in the small car. "Buckle up," Tony told him. Loki glanced at him once before quickly deciding it was a good idea. Once Tony heard the click of Loki's seatbelt, they were off.

Tony made a beeline for the easiest car first, sending a less adept car flying across the room while

Tony immediately set after his next target.

When Tony started to gear up for the third car, Loki began to laugh in sheer glee. Tony went as fast as the little car would allow. Loki's laughter echoed in his ears as they went flying, a bit better off than the other cars.

Spurred on by Loki's joy, Tony took riskier moves. They didn't always pay off, but Loki encouraged them. On one particularly rough spin, Loki caught himself on Tony's thigh, gripping it tight for a split second before letting go and glancing away with his head turned so Tony couldn't see. Then he was right back to telling Tony which car to go for next.

It wasn't long before everyone else began to carefully avoid them. A few of the kids tried to get back at Tony, but he had a better understanding of physics and made better guesses. Eventually, they had to give the ride up. With smiles on their faces like a couple of bad kids, they walked back to the arcade.

"Are you hungry?" Loki asked.

Tony thought about making some sort of innuendo, but then thought better of it. "Yeah."

"Good," Loki said, leading the way out to his car.

Loki had picked out a little restaurant with a farm to table thing going on and a modern, natural look with lots of wood and plant accents. Their waitress led them to a table on the second floor. The room only had five tables, and they were empty. Antique Edison style bulb string lights crossed the ceiling and were also outside on the ivy covered terrace. They were given the table by the window.

Tony had to admit, in a charming way, it was sort of romantic.

"Their coffee is good," Loki told him, opening the slim menu.

"A man after my own heart," Tony said.

Without looking up, Loki answered, "I should hope so." There was a note of something in it, Tony couldn't tell what. A soft thrill ran through him though, like when he read a particularly vivid detail in Loki's writing.

Just then the waitress reappeared, asking for their drink orders. Tony put in for the coffee while Loki got a glass of red wine. They both ordered pasta dishes. For a moment they sat in contemplative silence. "We're lucky to have the place to ourselves," Tony said.

"It's mid-afternoon," Loki said. "I'm sure it won't last too long."

Tony adjusted the watch on his wrist. It was his best watch, the one that was a gift Tony could never quite bring himself to throw out. "An art museum and an arcade. It wasn't a combo I would've predicted but it was good."

"The art museum was for me," Loki said. "The arcade was for you." There was warmth and thought in the way he spoke.

"I'm not sure if I'm supposed to feel insulted or pleased," Tony said anyway.

It earned a bit of amusement from Loki. "I enjoyed both," he clarified for Tony.

"Me too." The waitress returned with their drinks just then, setting them down and vanishing as quickly as she'd appeared.

Loki tilted the wine glass, watching the red liquid spin.

"Man," Tony said. "And I made our first date that weird werewolf thing." He said it because he didn't know what else to say. Loki paused mid sip, holding the glass against his lips as he stared out the window. Slowly, his attention turned back on to Tony.

Those clever green eyes stilled on Tony with an intensity that was more than a little unsettling. Only the nervous twist in Loki's lips cushioned it.

"Did you know you were going to ask me on a date when you asked me to the movies that day?"

Tony stared at him. Loki had his lips pressed together in another nervous tell, his gaze unwavering. "Yeah," Tony said. "I mean," he pushed his shoulders back, staring out the window. "I wanted to ask you on a date, I just... I didn't know how."

"What made you ask that night?"

Tony turned back towards Loki's voice. Loki's expression was soft. There was curiosity and longing on Loki's face, beneath the usual practiced confidence.

"I—" He could feel himself blushing a bit. He might as well be honest. "Kind of meant to ask you on a date, but I forgot to specify." Tony licked his lips. "And then I realized you're my best friend and I was happy hanging out with you anyway. I was just happy you'd come."

"Tony," Loki said, drawing Tony's self-conscious attention away from the window again. Tony wasn't used to Loki staring at him with such unguarded fondness. Loki's mind was still sharp, though. "What made you ask now?"

Did Loki—no, he couldn't know. Tony was pretty sure of that.

Guilt struck him, sinking down into his gut and making his chest cold. What was he supposed to say? That he looked through Loki's files and realized that he actually had a chance with him? That he was a shitty friend that let his curiosity get him into trouble? That he thought Loki was a great writer and wished that Loki would tell him about the things he'd written instead of squirreling them away with his feelings on his hard drive?

He couldn't say any of that.

He didn't want to lose Loki. This was their second date, and Tony... Tony couldn't remember the last time he'd been this happy. He didn't want to lose it so soon.

Tony cleared his throat. Loki's attention hadn't wavered. He was waiting patiently, eyebrows bowed in encouraging sympathy. "I—" There was one truth he could tell. "Started thinking about how if I didn't say something, somebody else would ask you, and I didn't want to lose my chance."

Loki smiled in a soft, private way that Tony felt he wasn't really meant to see.

Tony reached for his coffee. It was good, just like Loki had said, but he was too distracted by that look on Loki's face to care.

“I had often entertained the thought of asking you,” Loki said. He reached for a tie that wasn’t there. His hand dropped back down into his lap. “I thought you had no interest in me in that way, and I knew you saw other people. I actually—” Loki smiled, but it was with relief. “I thought you’d been seeing someone new when you started dressing differently. I thought that it was getting serious with that person.”

“That was for you,” Tony said, awkwardly blurting out the truth. The look Loki gave him, so bright and surprised and happy, made Tony’s heart skip a beat.

The waitress appeared, setting down two plates of pasta. The moment was shattered by polite conversation and reassurances that they had everything they needed. Tony watched Loki twirl a forkful of pasta and place it past his lips and into a mouth that was suddenly very distracting.

Coughing, Tony reached for his coffee. He swallowed it down, then hurried to take a bite of pasta like a normal person.

“Are you seeing anyone else right now?” Loki asked. He twirled the white sauce pasta into a perfect curl, oblivious to the coughing fit Tony was suppressing.

Tony blinked back tears. He quickly wiped them away, taking another sip of coffee. His throat felt okay enough to talk now. “No,” he breathed out.

“I would like to be exclusive,” Loki said, fork turning in tight twists. “I have to admit, I’m not very good at sharing.”

“Yeah, no, I’d kind of just assumed we were,” Tony said. Loki glanced up too sharply. “About the being exclusive part, not the you not being good at sharing.” Loki relaxed, reaching for his wine glass. “Though I kind of assumed that part too from all the sibling rivalry...” Loki smiled, but didn’t say anything. Tony was sure there were plenty of stories that he hadn’t heard. “Does this mean I get to call you my boyfriend?”

“If you’re good,” Loki said coyly.

“What if I’m not?” Tony asked in a low voice. He was just about to hear Loki’s quip when the waitress appeared.

“Everything taste good?” She asked, tapping her pen against the checkbooks in her apron.

“Yeah,” Tony said, catching Loki’s smirk out of the corner of his eye. Whatever Loki was going to say wasn’t said after she’d left. Instead Loki brought up the show Tony had been watching and they talked with the ease they had at work.

Loki pulled up outside of Tony’s apartment, smoothly parallel parking between Tony’s car and his neighbor’s. Loki was quiet. He held still, waiting, as Tony tugged off his seatbelt. The metallic sound echoed in the silence.

Tony’s heart was pounding again. He wanted to invite Loki back inside. He blinked, holding his eyes shut a little longer, steadying himself.

Leather groaned as Loki leaned across the seats, going for a kiss that knocked the thought right out of Tony’s head. It was soft and tender like before. Loki’s warm breath drifted against his cheek as impossibly soft lips pressed to his.

Tony reached for Loki, fingers slipping up into silky hair. Loki's breaths were louder. Tony teased his tongue along the seam of Loki's lips, encouraging him to open up. A soft moan met him as Tony tasted the faintest hint of red wine. His hand slid down to Loki's tensed shoulder. A hand dug into Tony's hair as Loki's breathless kiss became more demanding.

"Lo," Tony breathed out. He blinked and found himself facing Loki with a flushed, almost sheepish expression. Except there was unbridled want under there, and dominance, and all the desires Tony had seen expressed in the pages Loki had written. Tony yearned to see Loki when he wasn't holding himself back. "You want to uh, come inside?" A closed lipped smile appeared on Loki's face. "See if I, uh, cleaned it up to your standards?"

Loki bit down on his lip. Tony could see the blood drain from the spot. Tony was lightheaded, overcome by just how much he'd wanted this and the potential for rejection.

"I—" Loki's voice was hoarse. "—'d like to wait." His hand slipped from Tony's hair and took a consoling grip on his shoulder. "If that's—okay."

"Yeah, yeah, of course," Tony breathed, alarm bells going off in his head. He wouldn't push though. He wasn't like that. "Is everything—"

"—Wonderful," Loki cut him off immediately. He was definitely flushing now, and Tony had never ever seen that on him. There was a lot of Loki he didn't know yet. This was only the second time he'd seen Loki outside work. Loki's voice echoed off the window. He wouldn't let Tony see his face, but Tony could see it in the reflection anyway. "I'd like to—ease into things."

"That's fine," Tony said, his first impulse to reassure him. He couldn't help that it ached, though. "We uh, we can adjust. Take it in steps."

There was a grateful smile on Loki's face when he finally turned back to Tony. He brushed his thumb against Tony's neck. Tony was not going to be able to get used to seeing him smile so damn much. "Thank you, Tony."

"You're a romantic guy," Tony said teasingly. Affection colored his words. Loki gently shoved Tony's shoulder before letting go. "I'll uh, see you Monday at work?"

Loki nodded, that unfamiliar but welcome warmth in his eyes again.

"And uh, next date is mine to pick, right boyfriend?" Tony asked, trying out the title. It felt good. New, but good.

Loki seemed like he was trying not to laugh. He only nodded. Tony reached for the handle. "Can I have a goodbye kiss?" He tried.

Loki didn't say anything, he just grabbed the back of Tony's neck and pulled him for one that was a lot dirtier than Tony had been expecting. When Loki released him, Tony was just dazed for a moment. "See you Monday, Tony," Loki said, amused.

"Yeah," Tony breathed out. He stumbled out into the chilly early evening air. Loki stayed until he opened the front door and waved goodbye. Tony let himself into his apartment, still dazed.

Where was the ravenous sex beast from the fics he'd read?

Tony brushed his fingertips against his jawline. Loki was...kind of sweet, now that he was thinking about it. And kind. Tony hadn't realized he had such a soft side. He leaned back against his apartment door with a lovesick little sigh.

He wondered if there were parts of him that Loki was just starting to get to know.

Okay, there was definitely one part of him that Loki wasn't getting to know and it demanded attention. Ha-ha. With another little sigh, Tony pulled away from the door. Time to find his laptop.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony spent a stupid amount of time researching ideas for their third date, but in the end he picked something he'd thought of on his own. A gastropub for lunch and then an afternoon in the city's sprawling botanical gardens. Loki had been pleasantly surprised, and then teasing as usual but with that new affectionate happiness that Tony couldn't get enough of.

When Tony pulled up outside of Loki's place to drop him off, he put the car in park but kept the engine running. Tony turned his head to see Loki self-consciously fumbling with his seatbelt. "Remember not to brag about our hot date at work on Monday," Tony said. "We don't want the secret getting out," he teased.

Loki got the seatbelt loose, freeing himself. "I'll try my best," Loki said.

They held eye contact for a moment, both seeming unsure of what the other wanted.

"Goodbye kiss?" Tony asked. Loki took a breath, his eyes flitting towards his apartment for a split second as if he was going to say something when he leaned in and kissed Tony instead.

It was dizzying, and made Tony's heart ache, because in that soft, delicate press of lips to his was all of the wanting and longing that was dying to get out. Loki pulled away, brushing his hair back behind his ear, and didn't move to get the door. It was such a different Loki from the one that Tony was used to, and he wasn't getting any more familiar.

Tony didn't want to make him feel pressured. "See you later, Loki."

"Yeah," Loki breathed, almost too softly for Tony to catch. He leaned in for another kiss, tongue greeting Tony's with a hunger that made his elbow slip and slam the horn. Loki breathed out a startled laugh as Tony jumped in surprise. Loki pulled away, flushing again. "See you on Monday, Tony."

Loki made a quick exit from the car then. Tony watched with heartache in his chest as Loki walked up the building's front steps and vanished past the door. He stayed there a while after the door had fallen shut, watching the spot Loki had disappeared to with a forlorn expression.

Tony drove home with the stereo up. He locked his apartment door behind him and wavered a moment before deciding to go into the bedroom. His jeans were too tight. *Again.*

Tony yanked the zipper open, shimmying the tight denim off his legs.

He flopped down on his back on the bed, reaching to the bedside table for lotion as he kicked his boxers off onto the sheets. His hand glided down his swollen length, already hard and warm and heavy in his tense hand. Tony tugged at the tight ache, slipping his thumb under the head without finesse. His eyes fell shut.

If their brief kisses hinted at any of what sex was going to be like, Tony wasn't sure he was going to survive. He wanted Loki, and worse than that, he was falling harder in love with Loki. Tony had known he'd been in love for a while now. He just hadn't known he could fall harder.

Loki was funny and caring and sweet...there was a word that Tony never thought he'd use for the

guy in a million years. He was just different when it was the two of them, not at work. Still him, still bits of arrogance and demand, but soft too...that part was going to kill Tony.

Tony tugged, a second impatient hand dropping to his balls as he desperately tried to chase the longing and loneliness from his mind.

Loki's self-conscious expressions and the broadening range of smiles he was now sharing infatuated Tony more than he'd care to admit. The fantasies of Loki and the riding crop were being replaced by thoughts of coaxing kisses and Loki's fingers digging into his shirt while his tongue teased its way in with Tony's. The soft moans that fell from his lips in the best encouragement that Tony'd ever heard. The sensation of his hand holding Tony's closer at the bumper carts. Tony came with a groan and a sharp climax that bottomed out almost instantly.

Tony stared up at the ceiling, feeling hollow.

He *had* to tell Loki.

He was dragging around that weight while falling deeper in love with Loki and it was going to hurt a thousand times worse than Tony could possibly bear.

Tony couldn't move from the bed. He stared up at his ceiling, fighting back the sudden urge to cry. He—he loved Loki. Could he say that? Was it okay to say that after only a few dates? He'd known Loki for more than a year though. It was just, every time they went out it was more perfect, and... Tony bit his lip until it hurt too much.

He needed to tell Loki. It was the right thing to do.

Tony let out a sigh, warm tears rolling down his cheeks. He could blame that on the sudden flux in hormones, he could. But he knew better.

And if Loki left him for it...well, Tony supposed that was fair. It'd hurt like hell, but he'd get it. Tony had completely violated his privacy.

He'd probably wonder what the sex could've been like for years. Tony smiled unhappily. He'd wonder how everything could've been like for years.

But maybe it was better to tell Loki before they'd gotten too far. Before they'd slept together. What if they'd had sex, and Loki felt used? Like Tony had asked him out just because he wanted to act out the fantasies in those pages? Would Loki feel that way? Tony had no idea.

Loki just seemed...happy about their relationship. That was all Tony could read, just incredible happiness that was making him feel guiltier and guiltier.

And Tony was going to smash that joy with a sledgehammer.

Fresh tears rolled down his face, but Tony didn't care. He knew it had to be done. He'd known since the beginning.

Slowly, he got up to take a shower. The hot water pounded against his skin. Tony closed his eyes, letting it drum against his head.

And then he had a thought.

He knew how he was going to confess. He wasn't going to drag it out. Hopefully, Loki would forgive him. If he was really, completely honest and sincere, maybe Loki would forgive him. Or

he'd be furious. Hey, maybe the whole still be friends thing would—wait, they'd both agreed that never really happened.

But Tony needed to confess before Loki could plan a fourth date where it'd all end up hurting more.

Tony let himself cry, but he didn't let go of the hope that it could still work out.

Chapter End Notes

Buckle up.

I'm enjoying hearing your thoughts and what you think is happening with them and what's going through Loki's mind! Next chapter shouldn't be too far off for an update. I'm evil, but not *that* evil.

Chapter 9

“Let’s sit back here,” Tony said, leading Loki to a secluded table on the cafe patio. It was chilly enough that they needed their jackets, but warm enough that it wasn’t too strange to be sitting outside.

Tony had picked the cafe because he knew it’d be quiet and have privacy. And it had enough room that he could bolt if Loki decided to eat him alive. Hopefully he’d be able to sprint halfway down the sidewalk before Loki caught him. If he was lucky, it was close enough that he could sprint all the way back to his apartment.

Loki sat with his back to the cafe window, facing Tony. He was wearing his suit from work, just as Tony was wearing his work clothes. Tony had charmed Loki into the impromptu dinner date because he couldn’t drag it out another day. He hadn’t been sleeping well.

“I haven’t been to this place before,” Loki said, picking up a turkey sandwich. The string lights above them glowed in the early evening hour, casting flattering shadows on his features.

Tony grabbed his soda, cold condensation running down his hand. He covered up the tremor in his wrist by taking a quick sip. “I get carryout from here sometimes.”

Loki took a bite out of his sandwich with an obvious appetite. Tony’s heart was pounding. He could do this.

He’d put so much thought into just how he was going to do this.

“I might order from here the next time I get stuck catering the Friday lunch,” Loki said. Tony brushed his forehead, thinking he felt a bead of sweat. Nothing was there. “Most of the time I have Sif order carryout, but Thor likes to order so he can get meat subs,” Loki said with an eye roll. “The one time I picked sushi there was anarchy.”

“I could see that,” Tony said before taking a long, shaky sip from his soda. The chill felt good against his tight throat.

“I don’t really see the charm in having a communal Friday lunch, but Father’s attached to the idea,” Loki said. “It’s not as if my mother brings in potluck dishes for it anymore.” He took a bite of a salt and vinegar chip. “She hasn’t done that since Thor and I started.”

Tony’s hand gripped his computer bag. The familiar handle was comforting in an odd way.

“Are you going to eat?” Loki asked.

“Yeah,” Tony said. He reached for his sandwich.

“Did you not sleep well last night either?” Loki asked. It was casual and caring and it only made Tony more tense about what he was about to say. Wanted to say.

“Nah, I think I need to listen to some books on tape, like you said.” He bit into his sandwich, sauce dripping down his fingers.

“Lectures are best,” Loki said. “Find some untalented blow hard with a podcast and you’ll be out like a light.”

Tony smiled, and it hurt. Fuck, it hurt.

He was trying to eat quickly. He needed the sandwich to be out of the way so that he could just be out with it.

“My Father should have a podcast,” Loki said. Tony got the joke, and it hurt again. He loved Loki. He loved the way he spoke, he loved the way that he just sat there casually with Tony as his best friend. “When he gives speeches I keep track of how long it takes him to work in a brag about himself. I’m always waiting to see if he’ll break his record.”

Tony forced a smile, taking another huge bite out of his sandwich. Loki stilled. “Are you alright?”

Tony coughed. “Yeah, yeah.” He reached for his drink. Loki had stopped eating, all of his attention on Tony with astute concern. Tony swallowed, bracing himself.

Fuck. He couldn’t wait until the end of the meal.

He grabbed a napkin, drying off his fingers. His heart was pounding so hard that his chest felt like it was on the brink of collapse. He was sweating and grateful that his jacket was covering it up. “I—uh, Loki—I have something I want you to see.”

Tony dug down into his computer bag as Loki leaned forward, curious.

Tony withdrew a long white envelope. His heart pounded in his ears. “I, uh, I—”

“Do you have a murder you need help covering up?” Loki asked lightly.

“No,” Tony said. He smiled, slightly relieved at the teasing. Then his heart only started to pound harder.

“Please don’t tell me you need legal help,” Loki said with a lot more weariness.

“No, nothing like that. I—I need you to see this.” He undid the string tab holding the envelope shut. Loki watched with intrigued, unsuspecting curiosity. Tony felt like shit. Loki had no idea.

Loki gave him a soft, encouraging smile that attempted to cover up the seemingly knowing amusement that Loki had. He probably thought that Tony was going to show him something sappy. Tony’s hand shook as he extended the envelope towards Loki. This was it. Once Loki found out, there was no going back. A bead of sweat rolled down his side. “I made it,” Tony said.

Loki’s long fingers withdrew the envelope from Tony’s loose grip. There was concern and intrigue both in his expression, but he was more serious now. Tony’s throat was dry.

Loki went to open the envelope.

“Promise me you’ll read all the way until the end,” Tony said, grabbing Loki’s wrist. “Promise me you’ll read it all before you say anything.”

Loki blinked, surprised at the request and tense now. The date night Loki that Tony had become so fond of had shifted into ‘I’m outside on a smoke break and not talking to anyone today including you, Tony’ Loki. Or maybe he was the boardroom Loki that Tony had only heard frightened whispers of.

“What’s in this?” Loki asked, sharp.

“Please,” Tony said, pleading and demanding at the same time. “Please, Loki.”

Loki held his gaze, softening a bit. “Alright,” he said. Tony’s hand withdrew. “There’d better not be a coverup conspiracy in here,” Loki said, the tension in his voice diluting the humor.

The papers ruffled as he pulled them out, his eyes darting across the first line as Tony held his breath.

The first time I met Loki, he was smoking hot. And mean. But smoking hot, and I had no idea what I was in for.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The first time I met Loki, he was smoking hot. And mean. But smoking hot, and I had no idea what I was in for.

He started hiding out downstairs with me for his “smoke break”, and we talked. I found out that Loki was funny. He was smart too, and I loved talking to him.

My dad had kicked me out a few months before, and I’d taken a job at Asgard because it was the first place that wanted to hire me and it was far away from everything back home. I didn’t know anyone in this city. Loki had no idea how much I started to look forward to his visits, or how much I came to consider him a friend. My best friend, actually.

Remember the part where I told you he was smoking hot?

Well before I knew it, I had a massive crush on him too.

But Loki never showed any interest in me like that. He was professional, even if he was slacking off at work and let me get away with working on my own code projects and stuff. Besides, he was my boss’s son and I knew he wasn’t the kind of guy to have a company scandal.

It hurt like hell, but I made peace with the fact that it was never going to happen.

Then, one day, Loki asked me to fix his laptop. It was a quick fix, but I felt like when Loki dropped it off that something was out of place. I felt like there was something he didn’t want me to see and I kind of let curiosity get the best of me.

I know it was wrong, but I looked for his porn. I guess I just kind of wanted to know what he’d be into. Maybe I just wanted something to pretend. I don’t know.

I looked at a couple of pictures, and then I found a file with our names in it.

And I discovered that Loki was in love with me too. He was an incredible writer. He was imaginative and creative. I copied the folder and kept it. I only meant to read a little. It was kind of like a bag of candy, you know? I started saying it would be just one and then I looked up and the whole bag was gone.

I felt guilty but I was also ecstatic because I realized for the first time that my feelings weren’t one sided. I knew it had been wrong for me to look at the files, but now that I knew we had a chance, I couldn’t give up.

I started wearing things inspired from his files. I guess I wanted to be that fantasy for him. Before I’d wondered if it was that I wasn’t good enough for him because I’m just the weird IT guy down in the basement even though he’s never said anything like that to me.

Nothing changed right away.

Then I started thinking about other people asking Loki out and losing my chance. I freaked out. I asked him out to the movies.

I had one of the best nights of my life.

I am in love with this man, and I think that I have been for a long time. Even before I read all of his confessions. I hope that when he reads this, he won't hate me. I hope he'll forgive me at some point. I understand if he doesn't. It was wrong and I'm an asshole for it, but I'm in love with you, Loki. This is kind of a weird way to tell someone, but I am. Our dates just made that crystal clear for me. I want to see where this thing goes and I can't stand looking at you knowing that I'm keeping this secret.

And I figure it's only fair that I offer up some fantasies of my own, so here goes the second story. I hope my head is still attached to my shoulders right now. Are you ready?

Once upon a time, Loki grabbed my hand at the end of our date and asked me to stay. I just wanted to kiss him. His lips were so soft and perfect. He was a great kisser.

Yeah, I'm not very good at writing kisses and I don't know how you do it.

We made out in the front seat of my car and Loki made all these hot moans that were honestly the biggest turn on for me I've ever heard. He pulled the seat recliner lever and fell back flat. I crawled into his lap and making out turned into sex.

This is so hard to write with a straight face. I've started and deleted this part so many times, you have no idea.

He looked so happy and kissed me back and I knew he loved it just as much as I did. The end.

I'm sorry it's not poetic. I can't write as well as you.

I thought about it, and instead of embarrassing myself with trying to write more, I decided to just tell you some of my kinks since I know some of yours. Then we're kind of even unless you're about to murder me, in which case you should skip this part and only read the last sentence like ten times. Okay. I'm into the whole riding crop thing, but only because of you. I like slow sex and rough sex but what I like most is knowing that the person I'm doing it with likes it too. I don't like being called degrading names in bed or being yelled at. I'm down for cuddling afterwards. I'm open to trying a lot of stuff, just ask. I look at the same model site that you use. I don't own a flesh light like you suggested, but I'm open to buying one if the idea turns you on. I'm also open to not doing anything sexual for a while because I know I've gone and made the whole thing super fucking weird and I'm sorry. I'm sorry I broke your trust. I'm also sorry for taking so long to tell you, it's just that with each date I fell in love with you more. I didn't want it to end. Not that it's an excuse. I'm sorry.

Tony

Loki's fingers trembled as he stared wide-eyed at the page.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, alright. This is the last of the teasing cliffhangers. Next chapter is nice and long and in editing so it shouldn't be too far off. ;)

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Loki's fingers trembled as he stared wide-eyed at the page. The papers wobbled in his hand with a soft fluttering sound. His eyes weren't moving anymore. He'd finished reading. The skin around his eyes had flushed a soft pink. A tear rolled down his cheek.

Tony stared at it in shock, unsure of what to think.

"Tony," Loki said, voice like gravel. "You—" He turned away, pinching the bridge of his nose as he blinked away more tears. Tony couldn't speak, watching Loki come apart. He had no precedent for it. "Kind—" Loki set the paper in his lap and buried his face in his hands.

Still frozen, Tony watched Loki attempt and fail to recompose himself until Loki rubbed his eye, revealing a tear stained face and flushed cheeks. "Loki—"

Loki shook his head, biting down on his lips and looking away.

"Are you—mad?" Tony asked, unsettled. Unnerved. It was really fucking weird to see Loki cry. He didn't even know it was possible, and yet here they were. Weird. Tony had assumed he'd be the first one to cry, not Loki. Not that he'd ever thought about it, actually.

Loki shook his head. "No," he said, voice breaking halfway through. It hit Tony that maybe he should've picked somewhere else to have this conversation. Just as he was about to suggest they move, Loki took a deep breath. "I didn't—" He pushed the words out. "Real—ize that—" He rubbed his hand across his forehead and through his hair. "You cared—that much."

Tony twisted his hands together in his lap. Was that a bad thing?

"I thought it was—just me. That I was—seeing what I wanted to see," Loki breathed out, fresh tears rolling down his cheeks and hitting the front of his blazer. "I couldn't tell if I was seeing what I wanted to see or if it was real—" Loki drew in another breath, trying to calm himself. "And you *knew*," he gritted out.

Tony's face flinched in an awkward, unspoken apology.

Loki's red rimmed eyes shot to him, the green in them made vivid by the crimson around them. "Why aren't you furious?"

"What?"

"I have been feeling so guilty," Loki said, rubbing his thumbs under his eyes and trying to make his face presentable. "You read them and you're not pissed? You read the one where—" His whole face flushed dark red, remembering. Then he turned to Tony in a panic. "I'm sorry," he said emphatically. "I'm sorry—" Tony had reached across the table and grabbed his hand, cutting him off.

"We should," Tony said, his voice feeling heavy, "talk about this somewhere else."

Everything felt strange and surreal.

Loki breathed in, the sound snotty and thick. He nodded his head. “My apartment’s near here,” Tony said. He didn’t feel like driving, and he sure as hell didn’t want to get in a car where Loki would be the one driving. “You wanna walk there? Cool off a little?” Tony felt like shit too. It’d taken a lot of nerve to give Loki that envelope. They both weren’t thinking straight.

“Yeah,” Loki said.

They cleared their table in silence. They said nothing as they began their walk down the sidewalk, Loki intermittently brushing a hand against his face to wipe away a new tear or two. Tony didn’t know how to respond so he didn’t reach for Loki. He didn’t dare to look at Loki either. He dug his hands into his pockets. The cold wind blew against them. Each step was calming Tony down, making it a little easier to think.

Out of all the ways he’d imagined this going, Loki having a panicky meltdown wasn’t a part of it. Maybe the folder meant more to Loki than Tony had assumed.

It was a few blocks down to Tony’s apartment. Loki followed him up the stairs, then stood quietly behind him like a heavy shadow as Tony unlocked the door. “Sorry it’s not cleaned up,” Tony said.

“It’s nice,” Loki said. He sounded sincere too. Tony wasn’t sure how he felt about that. He just turned on the lights.

“You uh, you want something to drink?” Tony asked. He’d already started walking towards the kitchen, but glanced back. Loki’s tall figure stood uncomfortably beside the couch, his shoulders hunched in on himself. “I’ve got beer, soda, water, some tea fusion things.”

“Tea would be appreciated,” Loki said, wavering awkwardly like he didn’t know what to do with himself.

“Grab a seat on the couch,” Tony said. “I’ll be right there.”

Tony considered the beer but passed it up for a soda. Loki had taken a seat on the far end of the couch when Tony came in and handed him his drink. “Thank you,” Loki said, entirely lacking the confidence that Tony had grown so used to. Tony didn’t like it.

Tony sat down beside him, taking the middle cushion. They were both quiet for a moment. Tony fiddled with his soda can’s tab as he watched Loki twist his lips from the corner of his eye. “I—” Loki said.

He took a deep breath. “Tony, I—I never meant for you to read those things.” His voice was more level than before and it was obvious the walk had calmed him down a lot more than he’d been at the cafe.

“Well there goes my hope that you planned the whole thing,” Tony said.

Loki glanced to him in surprise. Tony shrugged. “I thought when you called me up to your office to fix the computer that you knew I’d read the files. I went up there hoping you were going to confess.”

Loki stared at him, attempting to process that. “I’m not a god Tony,” he said, a bit self-conscious. He bit his lip. “That would’ve just been a brilliant way to get me fired. What if you’d been horrified?”

“I know, but you have all the plans,” Tony said, gesturing vaguely.

Loki tried to smile but didn't really make it. "I don't plan *everything*."

They were trying to get back to the light snarking and teasing, but it wasn't really working. This was all new ground.

Tony took a sip of his soda. Loki ran his fingers through his hair again, setting his soda tea fusion bottle down on the coffee table. He sat still, gaze unfocused in thought. "I can't believe you care that much about me."

Loki pulled the wrinkled paper out of the envelope. He stared down at the words, eyes filling with tears again. "Tony—" Loki's voice broke with a sob. "You have such a—good heart."

"Funny," Tony said. "I've been told I didn't have a heart." He grasped at humor, still unsettled by Loki's change in demeanor.

"Well whoever told you that was a dumb shit," Loki hissed out. Tony's lips twitched up. Take that, Dad. "Tony you didn't just read them, you—" Loki stared up at the ceiling, searching for words. "You wore things you knew I would like!" Loki's eyes darted back and forth across the ceiling. "That's so—kind, and generous—Tony—" Loki bit his lip shaking his head. "I—no one has ever said something like this to me." He pressed the paper against his chest, smiling at his own expense.

Loki breathed in. "You even wrote a story, you—nerd," he said softly with faint amusement.

"You made it look a lot easier than it is," Tony said.

Loki set a hand against his forehead. "I thought I was losing my mind when you dressed like that." Loki paused. "I thought I'd tricked myself into seeing something that wasn't there." Tony could hear each heavy breath Loki took beside him. "I had to be sure—" Loki paused, pressing his hand to his mouth instead. "And then we work together, and if we were found out it would jeopardize your job, and it's entirely inappropriate for me to be—to make advances—I didn't want to lose you, and you need your job—" He turned to look at Tony.

Tony shifted in his gaze, unsure of what to do now that the conversation was so uncensored and serious. "I wasn't thinking much about that when I was reading your stuff."

Loki swallowed. He reached for his drink, the cap rattling in his fingers as he worked it off. He took a sip like it was a shot. "I didn't want to put you in this position. Writing was a way of accepting what I couldn't have." His eyes narrowed as he thought. "It makes more sense now, why you asked me out." The bottle crinkled as Loki gripped it. "I thought it was strange, after all this time. I kept trying to work out why. What changed."

"I told you," Tony said.

"But you didn't tell me all of it," Loki said. Tony knew he was right. Loki let out a sigh. "This makes more sense."

They lapsed back into silence. Tony wasn't sure what Loki was thinking, but he knew he felt like he was in the Mirror Universe. Loki just needed to be the one wearing the goatee.

"I am sorry that you read what I wrote." The worst part was that Loki looked wrecked over it too. Tony'd never seen him look so guilty.

Tony made an unhappy grimace. He wasn't sorry, aside from the whole stealing the file and reading it thing. "Why?"

“It was a caricature of you,” Loki said. He stared at the floor in morose thought. “And myself. It appears that we have both imagined different versions of the other because of my writing.”

Tony thought about how he could say that people usually put their best face on at the beginning of a relationship anyway, or how it was fine, or how he’d kind of imagined Loki differently too, or even how they could probably figure it out if they talked about it. Instead what came out of his mouth was, “This is kind of like the Mirror Universe except you don’t have a goatee.”

Loki’s eyebrows came together as he stared at Tony, blinking.

“I don’t want to lose mine though,” Tony said. “I’d look like hell without my facial hair.”

After the confusion, the slightest flicker of annoyance passed over Loki’s face before it vanished. Loki twisted the cap on his drink. “Where do you want to go from here?”

It was an open, honest question.

And one Tony didn’t know how to answer. He was still sort of adjusting.

Tony gave Loki a goofy smile, trying to disguise the caginess he felt. “Does this mean the office party breath play thing you wrote is off the table?”

Loki flinched like he’d been struck, then glanced away, flushing again. This time, Tony could easily read the irritation in his features, the frustration that Loki was obviously trying to shove down. “Not everything I wrote is something I’d like to do,” Loki said quietly. “There are some things I only enjoy writing about.”

Well that was disappointing.

Tony didn’t know why Loki had to act remorseful about it, though. “So is me living as a smith in your kingdom one of those writing only things?” Tony asked, trying to joke again.

Loki didn’t speak as he looked back at Tony, but it was impossible to read his thoughts. Tony just waited for the quip.

“I’ve made you uncomfortable,” Loki said. “I should go.” He started to rise.

“Loki! Loki, wait.” Loki froze halfway between standing and sitting, then slowly sat back down. “You’re right. We—we don’t really know each other outside of work. I mean, I thought I had you all figured out but I don’t. It’s just, it’s new for me.”

Loki pressed his lips together. “You’re new for me too.”

Silence rolled back in. Tony took a drink of his soda, the carbonation burning down his throat as he swallowed too fast. Loki tucked the wrinkled papers back inside the envelope. A passing car honked outside.

Tony tried to catch a glimpse of Loki out of the corner of his eye. It was clear that he was lost in thought, and none of it looked good. The complete doubt in Loki’s expression was a new thing too. The self-loathing, maybe.

There were lots of new things.

“We got along so well inside of work that I thought it’d be the exact same outside, just with sex.” Tony rubbed the back of his neck. “The dates have been pretty great, though.”

Loki glanced up, attentive.

“I liked date Loki,” Tony told him.

Loki managed a heavy smile. “I liked date Tony too.”

Tony smiled back at him, hope returning to Loki’s eyes, but then the moment faded and the silence returned.

Loki set his drink down, leaning away from Tony on the couch. “I already bought tickets for our fourth date,” Loki said with regret. “Maybe I can get Thor to go with me.”

“Why?” Tony said. Loki’s sad look said it all. “I wouldn’t turn down another date.” He shrugged, hoping to get through. “If you’re not mad that I looked at your writing, I’m not mad that you wrote it.” He smiled at Loki. “I don’t see what the problem is.”

Loki shook his head. “We work together. This is all—I don’t want you to lose your job,” Loki said emphatically. “And I won’t leave my position, and I won’t ask you to look for a new job.”

“Well, good. I like the gig I’ve got going on,” Tony said.

Loki’s expression turned tired. “It’s beneath you. You’re too capable to be wasting your talent in that basement,” Loki said. “I’d always planned to promote you once I took over.”

“It’s fine,” Tony said. “Besides, I don’t think you can exactly promote your boyfriend without it being an issue.”

Loki’s watch caught the light as he rubbed his fingers against the base of his skull. It didn’t seem like Loki had really realized that before. “No. I suppose you’re right.” He let out a hard breath. “This is too complicated.”

He was getting that look on his face, and Tony was getting the feeling that it meant that Loki was convincing himself this was impossible. And as disoriented as Tony was by the whole evening, he knew he wasn’t ready to let the thing between them go. “I could always find a job somewhere else,” Tony said. “But to be honest, I like seeing you everyday. I’m not really willing to give that up.” He set his drink down beside Loki’s on the table. “And yeah, we’ll probably have a lot of problems in that direction later down the road, but that’s all stuff we can figure out when and if it happens.” Tony kicked his feet up on the coffee table. “Why don’t we get to know each other outside of work and start there?”

The mingle of relief and hope in Loki’s expression honestly hurt to look at. It was too intimate, too intense and close.

Tony hadn’t realized it before now, but he’d kind of bought into story Loki and work Loki. He *wanted* Loki to be this untouchable badass that was all dominance and sex and it was weird to see him be so...human. Vulnerable.

“I’d like to get to know you again,” Loki said, tenderness in his voice.

Tony tried to let his fantasy of unassailable badass Loki go. He knew that was going to take some time too. “You know,” Tony said. “We could still use the tickets and call it date number one?”

Loki smiled from some joke that Tony didn’t get. “I don’t think Thor would like the planetarium’s Star Trek night anyway.”

Tony lit up. “You got Star Trek tickets?”

Loki smiled, glancing away. “You are alluding to it all the time.”

It was the first time Tony had felt light since they’d come inside his apartment. But like before, the mood sobered after a moment.

“We need some time to adjust,” Loki said. It seemed like it pained him to say the next part. “We should go as only friends.”

“Or just,” Tony said. “Not put labels on it and see where it goes?” Loki seemed reluctant, but Tony thought Loki was overthinking it. “No pressure.”

“I don’t know,” Loki said. He combed both hands back through his hair. “I—is this really a good idea?” He looked away then back, fighting with himself.

“I don’t know,” Tony said. It could be a terrible idea. But he was finally being level and open with Loki. “I guess we’ll just have to find out.”

Loki turned away in thought again, nodding. Tony was struck by how weird this whole thing was again. This was definitely not the fantasy he’d had of bringing Loki back into his apartment. “It’s late,” Loki said. “I should be going.” He got up.

“Wait.”

It gave him anxiety to see Loki leave. “You’re uh, we’re both tired. Why don’t you spend the night?” Tony’s chest filled with hope as he made the suggestion. “No funny business, I promise. I’ll even sleep on the couch if it makes you feel comfortable.” Tony shifted nervously in his seat. “I’d just rather not be alone tonight.” That was honest too.

Loki obviously wanted to say yes.

“I shouldn’t do this,” Loki said. He pinched the bridge of his nose, closing his eyes.

“We can change into pajamas and watch a movie,” Tony said. “I’ll lend you some of my stuff.” He managed a smile. “As friends. Seriously.” He got up off the couch. He was going to tell Loki he didn’t have to stay, but it really seemed like Loki wanted to and Tony was selfish. He didn’t want Loki to talk himself out of it. “You probably shouldn’t drive anyway,” Tony added, knowing he was bullshitting. “I’ve got everything you need here. You can even use my shower if you want.”

“I shower in the mornings,” Loki said.

“Okay,” Tony said, not knowing what that had to do with anything. “Really, seriously,” Tony said. “Just stay.” His natural puppy dog eyes lent themselves well to Tony’s soft, questioning, “Okay?”

Loki blinked his eyes shut, and Tony could tell the moment he gave in, his entire posture sinking as the tension left. “Alright.”

Tony decided against reaching out to touch Loki, though he wanted to. Instead he flitted towards the couch, snatching up the TV remote. “You find something to watch. I’ll grab some clothes that I think will fit you and make popcorn.”

Loki’s hand was limp as Tony set the remote into it. “I’ll be right back,” he promised.

Tony darted to his bedroom. He felt happy, he had to admit that. It was about as much as he’d let

himself think. He grabbed the longest pair of pajama pants he owned and a soft, boxy t-shirt that he hoped wouldn't be too small. He got his oversized black hoodie too, just in case. Then Tony rushed to change into his own pajamas.

He half expected Loki to be gone when he got out, but he was sitting politely on the couch, watching a show on manatees.

"Here," Tony said, extending the pile of clothes over the back of the couch. "My bedroom's the second door or you can change in the bathroom. I'll make some popcorn." Loki accepted the bundle, and Tony hurried into the kitchen.

He didn't know why he was doing this, but it felt good. He'd meant what he'd said about not being alone. Didn't make this any less awkward, but hey. Whatever. Tony rocked on his feet as he watched the popcorn bag spin in the microwave.

When he went back in the living room, Loki was holding his suit in his arms. "Hanger," Tony said for him. He set the oversized bowl of popcorn down on the couch. "I'll get that."

Once Loki's suit was hung up, they sat down on the couch. The bottom of the flannel pajamas hit two inches above Loki's heel, but he said the waist fit. Tony was sure that the shirt was a little snug because Loki zipped up the now slender black hoodie over it.

Tony couldn't watch a documentary on manatees.

"You haven't seen any of the first series, have you?" Tony asked.

Loki withdrew from his thoughts to answer. "Of what?"

"Star Trek," Tony said. Loki shook his head. "Time to fix that," Tony announced.

They were quiet as they watched, but Loki relaxed just enough that Tony didn't worry too much. Loki seemed content, considering the evening that they'd had. It was nice to just sit in the quiet with the reassurance that Loki hadn't left him.

Tony hadn't realized how late it had gotten, or how tired he was. At the end of the second episode Loki was yawning and Tony was starting to fall asleep. He turned it off.

"My bed's a lot more comfortable than the couch," Tony said. "I can put fresh sheets on it for you."

Loki seemed guilty, or maybe just exhausted when he asked, "You're going to sleep on the couch?" Tony shrugged. "It's your bed," Loki said.

"You can join me if you want," Tony said. "Or you can sleep wherever you want."

Maybe Loki said it to be nice, Tony couldn't really tell. It was hard to read anything but bone crushing exhaustion from Loki. "I'll share the bed with you."

"Okay," Tony said, struggling not to show the happiness that zipped through him. He didn't know why it made him so happy. It was supposed to freak him out after the evening they'd had, but it didn't really.

Loki followed him into the bedroom and watched him change the sheets, helping to get the fitted sheet on the mattress.

It wasn't awkward until they were both under the covers with a wide line dividing the center of the bed.

Tony reached for the light.

"Goodnight, Loki."

"Goodnight, Tony."

Tony laid in the dark, listening for more to be said. Maybe Loki was doing the same. Tony passed out quickly, sleep overpowering him.

They awoke to Tony's screeching alarm clock. Tony flipped on the light before he remembered the night before. Another person there wasn't exactly a strange sight, but it startled him all the same. Loki blinked in the bed beside him, dazed and confused. His hair had tangled into a curly bird's nest on the pillow.

That was *very* new.

And, as something tender slipped into Tony's chest, he thought it was a newness that he could get used to. "Breakfast?" Tony asked as Loki blinked, attempting to squint at him.

They shuffled into the kitchen. Tony made coffee and told Loki where to find his cereal. They cleared computer parts off the table and sat down together. Tony hadn't had his coffee so he wasn't fully functional, and Loki didn't seem to be either. Tony liked sitting with Loki like this, though. He liked Loki being here. It made him feel hopeful for what the future could be like.

And it was over too fast. Loki got up, setting his utensils in the dishwasher. "I need to get my car and get back to shower," he said, rubbing his eyes. Tony could tell that he was worried about being on time.

Tony considered suggesting that they call in sick, but he knew that wasn't the way to go.

"Thank you for breakfast," Loki said.

"No problem."

Tony was still drinking his coffee when Loki came back in the room, dressed in his suit again with his hair finger combed back into a sloppy bun and the white envelope from yesterday under his arm. "See you at work?" Tony asked.

Loki nodded. Tony only picked up on his tiredness. Maybe embarrassment, maybe not. It was hard to tell. "I need to hurry. See you at work."

"Okay," Tony said. He got up to walk Loki out. The front door was freezing and he was in his pajamas so he didn't stay there to wave, but he glanced out his window once he was back inside. Loki had his hands shoved inside his blazer and was hunched forward against the wind, taking long strides as he started back to the cafe.

Wait. Tony's car was down there at the cafe too. In the cold. "Fuck," Tony whispered, staring up at the ceiling.

Chapter End Notes

They're going to need another conversation about it too, and that will come. The black hoodie is thanks to dls. I'm enjoying hearing what parts you liked and what you're all thinking of what is going on and your reactions! This is the end of the updates bomb this week, thanks for all of your enthusiasm!

Chapter 12

Loki missed smoke break number one, and while that wasn't exactly a shock, it was smoke break number two that set Tony on edge. Loki wasn't coming down to see him today. Tony had texted at lunch but all he'd gotten back was some nonsense about how Loki had meetings all day and couldn't respond. Like that had ever stopped Loki before.

Tony knew he was being avoided, and he knew in his gut that he couldn't let Loki freak out and withdraw. It would just make this whole thing worse. He just knew it.

And yeah, it'd been weird with Loki yesterday, but Tony didn't want to let that weirdness fester. And it wasn't like Tony had just gotten over the guy or something. He needed Loki to get his ass down here and show him that it was going to be fine. He needed to show himself that it was going to be fine. But Loki was up sulking in his office like a spooked cat.

So if Loki wasn't going to come down to see him and wasn't going to answer his texts, Tony would have to make the effort. He needed to go upstairs. Tony turned to his computer.

It took less than a minute for Sif to call. "The wifi is completely down," Sif said without so much as a hello. "It's displaying an error message that says TBCFOL code when we try to connect to anything. I've reset it. It's still there."

"Oh," Tony said, laying the concern on thick. "That's serious." Total Bullshit Code for Operation Loki was very, very serious. "I'll be right up."

He grabbed a stud finder for show. Hopefully the wand like device would come in handy if he needed an excuse to wander into Loki's office. He tucked his laptop under his arm and got in the elevator.

Sif was just as snooty and agitated as Tony remembered. "Here," she said, pointing to her computer.

"Thanks. I wasn't sure what your computer looked like."

Sif glowered at him but said nothing as she pushed her chair back on its wheels. Tony glanced over at Loki's office.

It was empty.

That had not exactly been expected.

Tony set his laptop down and went around the desk. He clicked on her settings and then pulled up some screens with code on them to look like he was doing something important. Tony took the stud finder from his back pocket. "I'm going to have to assess where the problem is coming from."

"How bad is it?"

"Oh, nothing that I can't fix," Tony smiled at her. It was flirty and obnoxious and got under her skin just as much as Tony had hoped it would. He turned away, waving the stud finder at the wall so it'd light up and beep dramatically. "This won't take too long."

Sif followed after Tony as he started past the front desk. She was intent on being his shadow. His very judgmental shadow.

He spotted Loki in the conference room. Loki's head was bowed slightly, braced as Odin said something. Thor was sitting beside him, arms crossed as he listened with a disengaged expression. Loki spoke, his lips moving quickly and agitated, only to respectfully freeze when Odin interrupted. Tony couldn't tell what was being said, but it was obvious that Loki was making concessions on something he was passionate about.

Tony's chest filled with sympathy.

Even from a distance, Tony could tell that Loki was worn out. His skin was paler than usual. His hair had been pulled back into a tight bun at the base of his neck and his crisp suit sagged at odd angles with his tired posture.

Loki always tried his best at work. He worked so hard, Tony knew that. It sucked to see him seem dejected as he deferred to his father. Tony wished he knew what they were talking about. Thor said something, gesturing with his hand, and then the other two were listening attentively to him.

"Did you find something?" Sif asked.

Oh, right. "Is there an error on all of the computers up here?"

"I haven't checked," Sif said. "What's wrong with it?"

Tony held the stud finder up to the wall so that it would screech for a moment. Sif glanced at it with unease. "What about the computer connected closest to yours?"

"Let's see," Sif said, her heels clicking as she led Tony straight into Loki's office. Tony sat down in Loki's chair as she stood beside him at the desk. "Only try to open the internet," she warned him.

"Thanks for the advice."

Tony's error code popped up on the screen. He might as well just fix it. He didn't know how long Loki was going to be in that meeting, and there was no point in waiting around here while the queen of stupid perfect butts was here.

"I need my laptop," Tony said. Sif followed him to the front desk. She sat down in her chair, watching Tony with an imperial air as he typed away at his laptop. He quickly undid the error on Sif's computer, then Loki's. As Sif affirmed that her computer was fine, Tony closed his laptop and set the stud finder on top of it. "I'll check the other one," Tony said, moving to Loki's office before Sif could catch up.

"What had the problem been?" Sif asked, taking a step into the office. Tony was already in the chair to check even though he was confident that it was fine.

"Sometimes in the system—" Tony recognized Loki behind her in the doorframe a split second before Sif realized he was behind her. Surprise, anger, and—fear? flitted through Loki's expression as he recognized Tony.

"The wifi was down," Sif explained, turning to her boss. "He said that it's fixed."

"Is it?" Loki asked with the same professional, indifferent air that Tony had seen before.

“Almost,” Tony said. Loki was staring at everything in the office but him. Just as Tony thought that there was a chewing out in his future, Loki spoke.

“Sif,” Loki said. “Could you please call down to maintenance and remind them that they still need to replace the light in the conference room?” She nodded, marching off like she’d been given the task of calling a prime minister.

Loki stalked up to the desk, towering over Tony as he stood as close as polite would allow. He was suspicious, and peeved, Tony could pick up on that. The door was still open. “Stop avoiding me,” Tony whispered. Loki stared at him, caught off guard. “You’re freaking out,” Tony told him.

“I am not,” Loki whispered. It was the most obvious lie that Tony’d ever heard from him.

Tony glared at him. “What are you doing on my computer?” Loki whispered, Sif’s voice nearly drowning him out from the other room.

“I needed an excuse to get up here to see you,” Tony whispered back.

“You can’t act suspicious—”

Sif’s phone call was already ending.

“—then you take a smoke break,” Tony demanded. Sif’s phone clattered against the receiver.

“Fine,” Loki hissed back. “Is everything alright, then?” Loki asked in his regular voice.

“Yeah, that should do it,” Tony said, getting up. He didn’t glance back as he left, annoyed too now. There was a smug look on Sif’s face as Tony gathered up his things. He tapped the stud finder against the desk, smiling sweetly at her. “Are you going to miss me?” He asked her, batting his eyes.

Her red lips turned up in a sneer. “Bye,” Tony said, waving enthusiastically at her as he went back in the elevator.

Tony was putting on his coat to go home when Loki slipped in past the door, carefully closing it behind himself. “That was risky,” Loki scolded. When he caught the look Tony was giving him, the wind was knocked out of his sails. Loki crossed his arms and leaned against the door, staring at Tony. “I was not avoiding you,” Loki said.

Tony tugged at his coat’s collar to make it lay flat. “You were freaking out,” Tony said. “You’re still freaking out.” Loki licked his lips, turning his face away from Tony. “Which is fine, okay? I get it.” Tony let out a rough sigh, staring upwards. “But I don’t think avoiding each other is the answer.” It was the worst answer. It was the one that made Tony feel utterly abandoned and like the whole thing was slipping through his fingers forever.

Loki shifted so that his whole back was against the door, not just one shoulder. “You don’t see me for one day and you act like I’ve left the country.”

Tony turned to face him. “Come on, Loki. We both know what’s going on. We’re not stupid.”

Loki glanced away, setting his jaw.

Then there was a slight twitch at the corner of his lips. “*I’m* not stupid. You on the other hand—the

jury's still out."

Tony snorted out a laugh. "Jackass," he muttered, zipping up his coat.

They were quiet for a moment. Loki was blocking the exit so Tony couldn't exactly walk out, but that didn't bother him. "You never gave me an affirmative on using the tickets," Tony said. "Or a time. I think we should go."

Loki held his gaze, his gorgeous green eyes thoughtful and unusually soft. He was always gorgeous, even on a day like today when it was obvious that he hadn't slept well. Loki pressed his lips together, the pink in them slowly draining back in as he let go. "Yeah," he said, nodding his head slightly. "We should go."

Tony grinned out of pure relief.

"I'll pick you up at six," Loki said. He glanced away then, pressing his hands against the door.

Tony shifted on his feet. It was still awkward, but Tony felt like if they could just go and see that they could have a good time together, things would be okay again. They could figure it all out. He just needed Loki to snap out of it. "Tomorrow," Tony clarified.

Loki nodded, slowly turning back to look at Tony. There was something cagey there, something that Tony didn't want to provoke. "Great."

"Tony," Loki said, leaning off the door. "Don't come upstairs again." Tony started to make a face. "Don't," Loki insisted. "The more that we associate, the more likely it is that people will grow suspicious."

"No one's going to suspect anything," Tony dismissed it.

"Sif is a bright woman," Loki said, half angry, half exhausted and worried. "You can't show up with a stud finder every time—"

"—How do you know what that is?" Tony blurted out, interrupting.

"I've spent a lot of time around you," Loki said. "I watched you use it to nail that clock on the wall." He leaned in closer. "Anyone up in that office can connect the dots," he said. His brow furrowed with concern, almost imploring Tony to get it. "If you show up for the wif in my office every day, no one's going to be fooled. If my father caught wind of it, he'd let you go just like Thor's flings. I don't want you to lose your job, Tony."

"Do you or don't you want to give this thing a try?" Tony shot back. Loki flinched. "I get the risks, alright?" Tony crossed his arms. "You did too. You went on the first few dates with me anyway." Loki swallowed, allowing the point to stand. "I think you're freaking out now because you know I read your stuff." Loki didn't argue with that either and Tony didn't have the heart to push on it. "Or maybe it just makes it more real to you that the work part is risky, which yeah, it is. But I don't care," Tony shrugged.

"I care. I've worked my entire life to inherit this company," Loki said quietly.

"That's fair," Tony said. "But what about wanting to get to know each other again?"

Loki smoothed his tie down. "I was sincere about that."

"So quit being a baby," Tony said. Loki's mouth dropped open, incredulous, quickly morphing

into a scowl. “Baby,” Tony taunted.

“You dick,” Loki hissed.

Tony beamed at him. “Yes I am.” Tony considered teasing him about the fic but decided it was still too raw. This was as close as he could get for now. “What’re you going to do about it?” Maybe pushing Loki’s buttons was a good way to go. This was the most like himself that Loki had been since it’d happened.

Loki took a step towards him, Tony retreating back in the same motion. “Your nerve astounds me Tony, it truly does.”

“That’s not the only part of me that’s going to astound you,” Tony leered.

Loki made a disgusted grimace, side eyeing Tony so hard he thought Loki was going to hurt himself.

The adrenaline shooting through Tony at the taunting and snark pushed him past the sense that all of this teasing could easily backfire. It was like if he scrambled, if he showed Loki it was okay and they could act like they used to, he could get back onto level ground with Loki. He just had to do it. He had to run before he walked. “Hey, serious question though,” Tony said.

Loki glanced at him, still a bit sour.

“So for this Star Trek thing, will you go as Spock, because obviously I’d make a better Kirk—” Loki’s scoffing sound cut him off. Undeterred, Tony continued, “And maybe you can like cut your hair and do the pointy ears thing?”

“I am not getting dressed up,” Loki put his foot down.

“What about as a tribble?” Tony asked.

Loki’s face scrunched up. “As a *what*?”

“Never mind,” Tony said. “Maybe that’s one of those after we’ve been dating for six months things.”

Loki shook his head and looked at Tony like he was fucking nuts.

He doubted that anyone could tell, but his heart was pounding like crazy. He was getting close to that level ground though, for now.

“Fine,” Tony said with a sigh. “I guess we’ll just have to go as normal people.” Something fond was slipping in under Loki’s indignant expression. “You’re probably more of a Bones anyway. Party pooper.”

Loki didn’t seem to know whether he wanted to tackle Tony to the ground or give in to the amusement threatening the flat line of his lips. “I’m leaving before I regret purchasing those tickets,” Loki announced.

“Lame,” Tony said as Loki grabbed the door handle.

“See you tomorrow, Tony,” Loki said, pulling open the door. He didn’t wait for Tony’s answering goodbye. Tony watched the door fall shut. He stared at it.

He felt hopeful, but he wasn’t so naive as to think a little teasing was going to sweep everything

under the rug. All he could really do though was hope that the date went well and that Loki showed up for his smoke breaks tomorrow.

Chapter 13

Tony tapped his pen against the desk, pretending to be working on the website updates he'd finished an hour ago. Loki was eight minutes late for his smoke break.

Again, it wasn't exactly a huge surprise, but Tony squeaked back and forth uneasily in his roller chair. Yeah, sometimes Loki couldn't get away for his breaks. But Tony felt like it was just too coincidental. Knew it was. He pulled out his phone and texted Loki. *Where are you?*

Two minutes ticked by. Tony was carving a groove into the floor. His phone chimed. *On my way.*

Yeah, Tony thought. *Now that I've reminded you.*

Tony folded his arms over his chest and rocked the chair back and forth.

Loki appeared a few minutes later, snowflakes adorning his black hair like stars. His nose had flushed bright red and two coffee cups were clenched in his gloved hands. "Hi Tony," Loki said, walking up to the desk. Tony unfolded his arms, trying not to look ticked off. Loki set one coffee down in front of Tony while he dug into the pocket of his wool coat. He withdrew a brown pastry bag and set it down beside Tony's coffee. "I was at the coffee shop when you texted," he explained.

"Thanks," Tony said, grabbing the coffee for a sip.

Loki set his coffee down and ran a hand over his hair to brush away the melting snowflakes. "I think I need to make something clear," Loki said. Tony glanced up. He didn't sound mad. "I was not avoiding you yesterday—" Tony breathed in a little too loudly. "—not in the way that you think," Loki said. "I wasn't avoiding you because I didn't want to see you," Loki said. "Or because I don't like you. I needed space to think. To process things before we talked so that I knew what I thought and what I wanted to say."

Loki rested his hands in his coat pockets. "You had weeks to think about everything after you found my files," Loki said. "Yesterday I'd only had the five minutes in my shower to think before I came to work." Loki smiled to the side, his expression softened by something. "And laying in your bed wasn't exactly an ideal place to think clearly."

Tony stared at him. He hadn't thought about Loki wanting time to think.

"It was, is a lot to process that you'd—read everything I wrote," Loki said. He took a heavy breath, the lapels of his heavy coat rising and falling with the action. "For you to suddenly know my private thoughts—it was more than a little jarring," Loki admitted. "It made me question, and I know I frightened you at the cafe."

"You didn't scare me," Tony said.

Loki smiled uneasily, not believing him. "I at least made you uncomfortable." Tony glanced away because that wasn't exactly untrue. "You weren't yourself in your apartment. I *know* I made you uncomfortable." Again, Tony wasn't sure what to say.

Loki shrugged off his coat, hanging it over the back of a chair near Tony's desk and tucking his leather gloves inside the pockets.

“I do think we should take it in steps, getting to know each other again.” Loki sat down on the one clear corner of Tony’s desk, picking up his own coffee. He curled his hand around the brown cardboard sleeve on it. “I think I may disappoint you after all that you’ve read.” Loki said it as an observation.

Loki took a sip, letting that hang in the air. Tony was thinking about it. Loki kind of did have a point. It wasn’t exactly a lie that Tony had been disappointed by Loki’s reaction. He’d kind of been so excited by what he’d found that he hadn’t questioned whether Loki had wanted all of it. Loki had written it, so he’d sort of just figured that was the case.

Tony wondered if Loki had picked up on that disappointment the other night too or if it was just a coincidence that he was worried that Tony would be disappointed if they weren’t everything he’d written about.

“Your letter was unbelievably kind and I appreciate it immensely Tony,” Loki said, watching his thumb run over the plastic lid on his coffee. “But you curated it knowing I would read it. My documents—were not.” Loki combed his fingers through his hair, a faint blush appearing on his cheekbones.

Tony guessed he hadn’t spent much time thinking about how Loki would react to knowing he’d read the files. He’d just assumed that Loki would be pissed and built all of his thinking around that. Loki took a sip of his coffee with that same strange self-consciousness that Tony hadn’t gotten accustomed to yet.

“I, uh, didn’t think about it like that,” Tony said. He didn’t really know what to say. He kept thinking he had Loki figured out only to remember that he didn’t. “I just thought you were avoiding me so—” Tony shrugged.

“I know.” Loki sighed. “I hadn’t had the time that I needed to process things yesterday.” He was softer and warmer than yesterday in the way he spoke. That unspoken happiness was there again too, much to Tony’s relief, even though he didn’t understand it completely. “Please be patient with me, Tony.”

Tony stared at Loki, wondering if Loki had really asked him for anything before. And he was being so damn *nice* about it too.

“It was not unlike you’d been reading my diary,” Loki said. “I understand that you weren’t upset, but it is still—” Loki tugged at the knot in his tie. “Unnerving. Yesterday I hadn’t had even twenty-four hours to process it.” Loki blinked, lost in thought again. “You know things that I—” Loki dropped that thought when he couldn’t finish it, taking a sip of his coffee. “I know you’re peeved that I wasn’t on time today, but I can’t and I haven’t made every break and I am not maliciously ignoring you when I’m late or miss a break.” Loki spoke firmly.

Maybe forcing his way up into the office yesterday had been a little overwhelming for Loki. Tony hadn’t meant for it to be. “I just wanna—” Tony felt like a complete nerd as he reached for his coffee and blurted it out. “Know that you like me.”

Loki stared at him like he was too precious and confusing at the same time, breaking into a sympathetic smile as Tony hid himself behind his coffee cup.

“Of course I like you,” Loki said, eyebrow quirking up in teasing as a confident smirk titled up his lips. “You have written proof of that ten times over.”

Tony scratched the back of his neck. Loki kind of had a point.

“That’s why I—” Loki breathed in, holding his coffee in his lap. “Want to get this right. I don’t want to rush into it with expectations. Anymore than there already are.”

“But what about the whole we work together thing?”

Loki turned more serious, his expression pensive as he scratched his pointer finger against his coffee lid. “You were right yesterday,” Loki said. “I did agree to our dates knowing the risk.” Something determined and calculating and a hell of a lot more familiar returned to his expression. “I am willing. I am also responsible for the risk, even more so in my position. Until I am in charge, we will have to be careful.” Loki glanced over at him. “Please don’t jeopardize yourself and come upstairs because I miss a text message.”

“I won’t,” Tony said, huffing. He grabbed the pastry bag and peeled it open to find a pumpkin loaf sitting inside. He broke off a bite sized chunk. “I saw you in the conference room yesterday,” Tony said. “What were you and your dad talking about?”

Loki watched him for a moment and then looked to the side, thinking. His eyes shifted as he thought, but it didn’t seem like he had the answer. “I don’t know,” he said honestly.

“It looked pretty intense,” Tony said.

“We re-evaluated a couple of our trade agreements yesterday,” Loki said. He turned to Tony like he might know the answer and be able to tell him. If Loki didn’t remember, Tony sure as hell couldn’t. Tony broke off another chunk to eat. “Yesterday,” Loki said, remembering something. “Please stop antagonizing Sif.”

Tony’s face betrayed his guilt but he played dumb anyway. “What?” Loki let out a sigh.

“I saw you flinging the stud finder around and waving at her as you got in the elevator,” Loki said. “The front desk is in direct view of my office,” he reminded Tony.

Oh. Yeah.

“I wasn’t antagonizing her.” Loki stared at him, unamused. “Fine. Whatever,” Tony said, grabbing another chunk of cake. Loki seemed to be debating saying something else when his phone started to ring. He glanced at the clock as he slipped the phone out of his pocket, grimacing.

“Hello?” Loki got off the desk, grabbing his coat. “I know, it’s just that the line was really long and the order was messed up—I can’t pick up anything for you, I’m already walking back.” Loki glared at the ceiling. He rolled his eyes as he started to tug on his coat sleeve, delicately trading the phone from one ear to another. “Thor, I am not your waiter—no you did not, I ordered—fine, you’re ordering lunch anyway.” Loki started buttoning up his coat. “No, now I’m just going to rub it in your face.” Loki grabbed his coffee, waiting for Thor to finish talking. “Okay. Bye, Thor. Bye. Bye,” he said, dragging the last word out. He was smiling when he hung up though. “I have to go.”

Tony was a little sorry to see him leave. “Okay.”

Loki smiled at him as he picked up his coffee. “I’ll see you this afternoon.”

Loki was on time for smoke break two, and they didn’t talk about anything serious. Loki asked about what Tony was working on and Tony shared some of his artificial intelligence work until the third floor called down to have help with their printer. When he left work at the end of the day to get dressed for their date, Tony felt hopeful.

“Where’s your uniform?” Loki asked as Tony got in the car.

Tony pulled the door shut, brushing snow off of his sleeve. “Where’re your ears?” He countered.

“I thought I had some lying around but I don’t,” Loki said, like pointy ears were the equivalent of having something like a wrench or a screwdriver.

Tony shook his head in mock disapproval. He hoped that his cologne wasn’t too strong. He was wearing his best jeans again and a suit jacket graphic t-shirt combo, but Loki was more dressed down than Tony had ever seen him. Well, when he wasn’t wearing Tony’s clothes.

Loki had his long wool coat from before, but beneath it was an actual cotton shirt with thin black and gray stripes and black trim around the collar. He had jeans on too, which Tony stared at a little too long. It was just that he didn’t know that Loki owned jeans, that was all. Also, nice. He still had his leather dress shoes on though.

The most important thing was that Loki seemed to be at ease, and he seemed happy again. Tony was good with that.

As they got onto the highway, Tony tried to think of something to say. Really, he was just curious about how tonight would go. “So we’re going as just friends?”

“I thought we were doing the go without labels thing?” Loki asked, fussing with the heating controls unnecessarily.

That was better than Tony had hoped for. “Yeah,” he said. “Just see where it goes.” He shifted away as the seat warmer felt too hot. Adjusting it he said, “And if it turns into kinky sexy times, so be it.”

Loki’s fingers withdrew from the control panel. “I think sex is off the table for tonight,” he said gently but firmly.

“Oh,” Tony said. He sounded disappointed and he knew it.

“Tony, it’s not an indefinite no, it’s a—” Loki licked his lips, searching for the right word.

“I read all your dirty thoughts and—” Tony thought about it. “—be patient kind of no?” Tony guessed for him.

“Yes,” Loki said, relieved. “At least for tonight.”

“Okay.” They had kind of talked about that, hadn’t they? Tony glanced at Loki. His grip on the steering wheel was tighter than before, his gaze set very much on the road in front of them. Maybe he’d made Loki uncomfortable this time? “Have I ever given you a run down on my favorite Star Trek episodes?”

“No,” Loki said, turning off on their exit. As Tony gave Loki a crash course on his favorite things, the awkward tension slipped out again. By the time they were walking into the planetarium, they were chatting like their usual selves.

They wandered through display cases of set props and artifacts, but Tony’s favorite part by far was

that there was a bridge they could take souvenir photos in. “Come on,” Tony said, practically dragging Loki in line.

Loki was a good sport about it when Tony asked him to take Spock’s spot on the bridge while he took the captain’s chair. They took a photo like that, but then Tony had an idea. “You get in the captain’s chair,” Tony insisted.

“What are you going to be, then?” Loki asked, sitting down as Tony hovered expectantly beside the chair.

“I’m going to sit at the helm,” Tony said, walking around him. He smiled as the camera flashed.

Tony got up to buy their souvenir photos, purchasing two sets before Loki could even get to the counter. Tony flipped past the first, then found the one of Loki as captain.

He was sitting, spread out in that chair like he owned the damn thing, an imperial but almost bored grin on his face. There was the domineering side Tony knew existed. He loved it.

He handed Loki the second set of photos to keep.

“This is going on my desk,” Tony announced. Loki looked over in surprise. “At home,” Tony amended. “And my fridge.”

Loki just smiled in reply, almost prideful. He followed Tony into the vendor alley. Then Tony was distracted by a few model replicas. When he finally remembered to look for Loki, he spotted him several booths down, head bowed as he looked at something on a table. Tony figured he was fine. He asked about the robotics on the display model.

Loki came walking back a few minutes later, holding a gray ball of fur in his palm. He stopped next to Tony, perplexed.

“This is a tribble?” Loki asked.

“Yeah,” Tony said, turning away from the display case and narrowly avoiding a cosplayer’s prop.

Loki held it up closer to his face as if looking for something. “This is what you wanted me to dress up as?” The tribble began to purr and make sounds as he inspected it. “Is there something I’m not getting? How is this a six month dating thing costume?” People were starting to glance over and give them weird looks.

Tony laughed self-consciously. “It was a joke,” he said, gently nudging Loki’s arm to push him away from the booth and curious ears. “Did you buy that thing?” Tony asked as they left.

Loki turned to him. He nodded.

Tony smiled. He couldn’t help it. “Just because it was a tribble?”

“You liked it,” Loki started to defend himself. Tony leaned against Loki for a moment in the crowd, charmed. He hadn’t thought about it, but Loki had bought tickets to this thing because he knew that Tony liked it. Loki didn’t really know anything about Star Trek, but he was trying for Tony. It was endearing.

Tony reached for the tribble, taking it from Loki’s hand. “It makes sounds and everything,” Tony said.

“What’d you get?” Loki asked, gesturing towards the bag hooked on Tony’s elbow.

“A model kit,” Tony said awkwardly. He scratched at his styled hair, then quit as soon as he felt the gel. “It was good that you came over when you did. I probably would’ve bought a whole lot more.”

“We can go back,” Loki said.

“It’s alright,” Tony said, handing the tribble back to Loki. “What’re you going to name it?”

“Name it?” Loki asked, poking his fingers into the long gray fur.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “What’s its name?”

Loki pouted his lips, thinking. “Tony,” he said.

Tony broke into a smile. “That’s real original,” he said. Loki was smirking. “But fine, I’m honored.”

“Good,” Loki said. They wandered down the alley just a little further before Loki said, “When I see the episode with this thing, am I going to regret naming it after you?”

Tony thought about that for a moment. “Nah,” he said, shaking his head. “I don’t think so,” he decided.

Loki stared down at the ball of fluff with warmth and amusement.

It was snowing outside as they left. Light snowflakes drifted through the yellow beams of the parking lot lights. They walked to the car with their noses buried down into their coats, bracing against the wind. Tony carefully set his merch bags in the back seat as Loki turned on the heat. “That was fun,” Tony said.

“It was,” Loki agreed, his hand hovering over the heat control. “I had a good time,” he said, hand resting against the control as he smiled hopefully at Tony.

“So date number two’s a possibility?” Tony asked.

Loki grinned, turning away as he gripped the steering wheel in both hands. He looked back over at Tony with a lot more daring in his expression. “I think so,” he said, acting like he was considering it. Then he surprised Tony. “May I kiss you?” Loki asked.

Tony stared at him a moment. It was so novel. One butterfly appeared, then two, then three in his stomach. “Next date or now?” Tony asked, trying not to blush like a teenager.

“Now,” Loki said.

Tony nodded. Loki leaned in, gracefully closing the distance between them.

His lips were cold from the chill, but they pressed tenderly to the corner of Tony’s mouth, Tony’s hand slipping down his abandoned seatbelt as he stretched to meet Loki. Tony was eager, leaning in across the center console as Loki’s lips locked over his bottom one. Loki’s warm breath drifted against him as their lips brushed apart, making Tony’s toes curl. Just as he thought Loki was going to pull away for good, Loki’s fingers were slipping into his hair, drawing Tony forward.

Tony melted into it. Eyes closed, he just melted completely into the sensation of it, of Loki's fingers tugging at his hair as Tony moaned against the lips that were so wanting against his own. "Loki," he muttered when he got a breath. Loki's hand slipped away.

Tony blinked, nearly squinting in the hazy parking lot lighting. Loki was smiling almost nervously as he stared out the windshield, pressing the back of his hand to his lips like he was trying to contain himself. Tony just sort of stared at him in a haze.

He didn't know what he'd been expecting, but it had exceeded expectations. He still wanted Loki. That was abundantly clear.

Loki reached for the gear shift. "I should be getting you home," he said softly.

Tony listened to the purr of the engine, comforted by it. He watched Loki, wondering what he was thinking.

Snowflakes drifted by the windows as Loki pulled out onto the road. It was unusually quiet in the city.

"Good?" Tony asked.

Loki glanced over. "What?"

"Just now," Tony clarified. "Did my breath smell like stale coffee?"

"No," Loki said lightly. "It, you were fine." It sounded way better than fine, but Loki didn't elaborate. The paper bags in the back seat crinkled as they shifted with the car's movement.

"It's snowing," Tony said.

"Yeah."

The windshield wipers caught the melting flakes, sliding back and forth in a soothing rhythm.

"You wanna stay at my place so you don't have to drive back in it?" Tony asked.

Loki spoke with a slight note of tiredness in his voice. "The roads aren't that bad. It's a dusting."

"Okay," Tony said. He brushed his thumbs over each other in his lap.

"Besides," Loki said. "Your apartment doesn't have room for me. You have enough parts in there to rebuild the International Space Station."

Tony looked over to find Loki smirking, watching Tony from the corner of his eye for a comeback.

"I'm using that stuff," Tony said, finding himself grinning. "It's organized chaos, okay?" Loki hummed skeptically. "Whatever. I bet your apartment has Martha Stewart doilies in it and copies of *The Economist* scattered across your coffee table."

"Only the latest issue," Loki said.

Tony shook his head, biting his lip as he tried not to laugh at the nerve of the guy.

He was sure he'd find out what it looked like. He'd be certain to make fun of Loki for it then.

Chapter 14

Fixing the copier on the third floor wasn't exactly in Tony's job description, but he'd already been there fixing a connectivity error when it had jammed one time. Now they called him whenever they couldn't fix it themselves.

Tony had pulled the front of the copier open and was sitting on the floor fussing with a gear when he saw a woman in a pink suit jacket hurry past, clutching a laptop to her chest. He thought nothing of it.

Pulling out a jammed sheet of paper, Tony heard two whispered voices walk past. He glanced up. He could only see a couple of cubicle desks from here, and they were empty. But the pair that had passed were quietly whispering to the front desk receptionist.

Something was going on. It was weird, but Tony wasn't sure what the gossip was. He figured it didn't really matter and started on delicately removing a piece of paper that had been trapped around a roller.

Tony had just started putting the copier back together when he heard an anxious male voice say a bit too loudly, "Mr. Odinson. We've made the corrections on the account, I'm sure they'll be happy to pay the difference when they realize we made a small error." Tony froze. Instinctively, he sat up straight. He didn't know if he wanted to see which Odinson it was that was being addressed. Hopefully, the man was on a phone call.

"You charged them at the wrong rate." Tony's ears pricked. Loki's voice was calm but flinty, nothing like the way he was on their dates and very alive and very close. "You have managed this account for ten years. Why did this particular invoice go out at the wrong rate?"

Tony instantly knew the guy had fucked up.

"Kitty wrote it up," the man said.

"It is not Ms. Pryde's job to invoice the account," Loki said. There was a pause. Tony dared a glance in their direction. Loki didn't show a single sign of distress. He was as composed and immaculately dressed as ever, but the manager he was speaking to was angry and flustered. He seemed to be on the verge of outright arguing with Loki. "It is your job to know the particulars of the account and to verify all documents before invoicing," Loki said. "You should not have delegated it to Ms. Pryde."

"She wasn't paying attention—"

"—This is not her task, it is yours. That is why you are paid as a manager." The man stopped after Loki cut him off. Loki waited.

The man shifted on his feet. "I should be able to give Kitty something as simple as an invoice to do."

Tony's stomach twisted. This man was challenging Loki, and it pissed him off.

"Ms. Pryde is responsible only for graphic design and advertising copy," Loki said. He hadn't raised his voice, but somehow he'd managed to make it intimidating. Tony outright looked at the manager now, glaring in spite of his efforts to act aloof. Tony had the distinct feeling that the guy was looking for someone else to pin it on but had run out of excuses. Loki was letting him dangle

and flail like a worm on a hook.

Finally, bitterly the guy said, "Alright."

"I expect you to make the corrections to the account that I outlined in the e-mail and to take responsibility for your own tasks from now on."

The guy just nodded.

"I will check in with you later this afternoon." Loki pinned the man with a stare that made the man squirm, but it was only for a split second. Then Loki stepped back, his gaze drifting over the office. There was a moment of surprise when he spotted Tony, but it was concealed in the blink of an eye. They stared at each other, faces expressionless, Tony's mind racing with all the things he wanted to say to Loki. Then Loki turned and went back into the elevator.

Kamala, the front desk receptionist, had tried to appear thoroughly invested in her work as the conversation had happened right beside her desk. The manager didn't bother to look at her once Loki had disappeared. "Spoiled brat," the manager said, loudly enough for everyone to hear. "Thinks he runs this place. I've been working here for seventeen years, who does he think he is?"

Kamala didn't say anything. She kept her eyes glued to the computer, keyboard keys clicking frantically.

Lacking an audience, the manager stomped back into his office, swinging the door shut.

Tony gently set the copier door shut. He brushed his hands off and wandered over to Kamala's desk.

"Awkward," he whispered to her, raising his eyebrows humorously. Immediately, Kamala lit up, trying not to laugh.

"You have no idea, Tony," she whispered back. Glancing at the manager's shut office door she whispered, "He deserved that. He gives everyone else things to do while he sits in there and plays online poker." Tony was not going to let that bit of information go to waste. "Mr. Odinson was going to meet him in the conference room, but he stormed him at the elevator."

Tony shook his head.

Suddenly, curious, he asked, "Has Mr. Odinson come down here before?"

Kamala frowned. "No," she said. "Not really." Tony glanced at the clock behind her. Loki would be on his smoke break in twenty minutes. "He's kind of scary though, don't you think?"

Tony blinked. He hoped he hadn't reacted too expressively. "You think so?"

"Yeah," Kamala whispered. "When he comes, you know you're in trouble."

"What about Thor?" Tony asked, feeling defensive.

Kamala smiled at him like that was amusing. "Thor's like a buff golden retriever. Loki's a doberman pinscher." Tony pressed his lips together. Normally he would've seen the humor in it, but he couldn't today.

"Does everyone argue with Loki like that?" Tony asked.

Kamala's sassy expression said it all. "Our manager's an idiot," she whispered. "Hey," she said,

bright eyed again. "Did you see we got a new vending machine in the lobby? It's got peanut butter candy."

Tony shrugged, shaking his head. "I'll have to check it out. I fixed the copier. Call me if it stops working."

"Will do," she said cheerfully.

Tony went back downstairs, pensive. He'd always pictured Loki as an authority figure that no one dared to question. He'd sooner picture people flinging themselves out of Loki's way as he walked down the hall than that disrespectful manager sneering at him and making up excuses. Tony chewed on his lip. He'd always known the top floor was tough, but maybe it was the whole building. He wondered if this job was harder for Loki than he thought.

Tony left to go to the bathroom a few minutes before Loki's break and returned to find his friend laying across the couch, one leg draped off the side with his toes leisurely waving back and forth in a slow tapping motion.

"That manager's a dick," Tony said immediately.

Loki glanced to the side, his lips tilting downward. "He's spineless," Loki said. Tony had expected him to be spiteful, but he just seemed resigned and tired about the whole thing.

"Kamala said he just sits in his office and plays online poker all day," Tony said.

Loki paused for a moment, then let his head drop back against the armrest. "I'll have to bring it up with HR," he said, annoyed at the ceiling.

"I can get proof," Tony offered. "I'll print out the whole thing and give it to you."

"You should forward it to HR, not me," Loki said. He sat up. Tony was still pissed about the stupid manager, but Loki didn't seem to care. "What are you doing Sunday?" He asked, infinitely more interested.

"Nothing," Tony said. He hadn't decided what he wanted to do for their second date yet. There was hope in Loki's eyes, though. Tony didn't want to let him down. "I haven't picked what we'll do yet," he admitted. Loki smiled, hopeful and happy. "Why not Saturday?"

"I have my mother's birthday dinner Saturday."

Fine. Sunday it was. "Ok, well, don't make plans for Sunday, alright?"

"I won't." Loki smiled at him, and it was a little bit condescending and a little bit amused and fond, so Tony didn't give him a hard time.

"What're you guys doing for your mom's birthday?" He asked.

"We'll probably go to the gardens in the afternoon and take her to a restaurant for dinner," Loki said. "I ordered her gift a month ago." Tony nodded, impressed with how fond Loki was of his mother, even if he didn't say so directly. "It's a tapestry from a well known artist. I hope she likes it."

"I'm sure she will," Tony assured him.

As the conversation drifted towards neutral topics, Tony fretted over what he'd plan for date two.

On Saturday, Tony didn't know what to do with himself. He built and carefully painted the Enterprise model he'd bought. It was nerdy but he loved every minute of it. Take that one, Dad.

Tony stared at it in the center of his kitchen table, arms crossed as he mused over the thought he'd tried to avoid.

Tony had a plan for Sunday, but he had no idea how Loki would be on the date. Tony was used to sleeping with people on date one. Sometimes date two, but that was unusual. Then again, he'd never wanted to stay with any of those people. He'd never dated anyone for longer than two months, and that time had been with a woman that he knew impressed his father. It'd been nice to have his dad's approval, but Tony had figured out after the first few times that they'd slept together that he didn't really like her personality, so he'd let her go once the holiday gatherings were finally over. The sentiment had been mutual. Maybe this kind of dating-dating was different. Maybe not.

But Loki's files didn't stop at kisses. Tony brushed his fingers over his lips. Loki wanted him. He didn't really doubt that.

Tony turned to the internet, hoping to find a secret stash of Loki's other works that'd give him some clues, but there was nothing. He could find the things that Loki had saved from other people. He scoured those for clues too, but eventually he had to accept that he was empty handed.

In the end, Tony wound up re-reading one of his favorites. He didn't feel as guilty now that Loki knew he'd read them, though it was still a bit strange. But Tony kind of missed Loki and it was sort of comforting to read his fics.

I brushed my thumbs over Tony's flushed cheeks, soft and yielding as rose petals. His bottom lip was swollen from my earlier attentions. His gaze was gentle and needy upon my own, yearning for the affection I would happily bestow upon his deserving and miraculous form. A quiet mewl fell from his lips and I soothed him with a whispered, "shh," granting his lips the caress they sought as I drew back his trembling leg and pushed into the tight heat of him.

Chapter 15

Tony was ten minutes early and he could just text Loki and wait, or he could park and go inside and get a glimpse of Loki's top secret and presumably incredibly awesome apartment. He was totally doing the second one.

Tony jogged up to the front door and reached for the handle, grinning at the thought.

It didn't budge. Tony glanced over. Key card. With a sigh, Tony reached for the buzzer. "Hello?" Loki asked, slightly surprised.

"Loki, let me in."

"Tony?"

"Hey. I'm early and it's freezing." Loki didn't say goodbye, but the door buzzed open a second later. Tony walked in on the polished tiles, past rows of shiny silver letter boxes. The front lobby was gorgeous. Tony wandered over to one of the elevators, trying not to gawk too hard.

He knew Loki's apartment number, but as he walked down the plush carpeting of Loki's hallway, he became even more excited. Loki's apartment had to be incredible. Tony stopped outside the door. The numbers were neatly fixed to the door in respectable gold letters. Tony took a deep breath, raising his hand to knock just as Loki pulled open the door.

"Hi." Tony beamed at Loki.

Loki seemed flustered, then amused as Tony looked over his shoulder to get a glimpse of the apartment. The living room was all windows with long, rectangular black leather couches and a glass coffee table. "Would you like to come in?" Loki asked knowingly.

"Yes."

Loki stepped back, smiling to himself. "I just need to grab my wallet and then we can go." As Loki started off in another direction, Tony wandered into the center of the room. Loki's kitchen was visible on the far, far end of the room. It was remarkably clean, if you didn't count the books piled up on one corner. The cabinets and the countertops were white and light gray. A massive black and gold painting was on the wall. Tony looked in the other direction towards a closed door that was presumably Loki's bedroom and another that was maybe a bathroom or another bedroom. Loki emerged from the one. "Ready?" He asked.

"You don't have *The Economist* on your table," Tony said.

"I've already read my copy," Loki said without missing a beat.

"Your apartment's amazing," Tony said. He looked back towards the windows, openly impressed with the skyline. "The rent must be insane. And it's perfect, like a movie set. Did you have a designer do this?"

"No," Loki said with quiet pride. He came to stand beside Tony.

"Well it's awesome," Tony said.

"Thank you." Loki went to grab his coat from a fancy coat hanger like an adult, which impressed

Tony since his was always just thrown over the back of his couch. “Shall we?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. He’d made it precisely two feet before he asked, “Since your TV is the size of an elephant, can we just assume that movie nights will be at your place?”

Loki breathed out what might have been a laugh, ushering Tony towards the door. “Sure,” he said. The warm promise sunk down into Tony’s chest, electrifying him at the future that implied. They made their way downstairs.

Tony had settled on going to a contemporary art museum. It was smaller than the other art museum they’d gone to, but Loki had said that he hadn’t been there in a few years. It was the closest that Tony could get to matching Loki’s interests. He didn’t think he’d be able to top Loki’s choice of Star Trek at the planetarium for a while.

It was quiet inside. There were only a few other guests wandering around. Loki and Tony went up to a massive metal sculpture of a praying mantis first. “I want this,” Tony said.

Loki smirked. “Why does that not surprise me?”

“I’d put it outside my apartment so that it was staring directly at the guy above me.”

“Who lives above you?” Loki asked.

Tony shrugged. “I don’t know.” He hooked his thumbs in his jean pockets. “I just know he plays Metallica at four in the morning and I’m blaming the garlic cooking smells on him.”

Loki seemed amused but didn’t comment on that. They started towards a painting. “Have you met any of your neighbors?” Loki asked.

“There’s an old guy that lives across from me and all I know about him is that he likes crossword puzzles. There’s a really quiet girl too, she just kind of nods when you say hello. I see her walking her dog a lot.” Tony’s sneakers squeaked on the floor as he started towards the next painting, Loki following. “The manager is some sort of real estate person and I only met her when I moved in. I know there’s a couple that lives up on the second floor somewhere, and there was a mom and her kid but I think they moved out because I haven’t seen them in ages.”

Tony turned to Loki to find that Loki had already been watching him. It was a pleasant discovery. Tony’d taken time getting his hair just right and putting his outfit together. He was wearing a t-shirt of an artsy cat with a suit jacket thrown over it so that he was trying but not trying too hard. He’d had his tinted sunglasses on when they’d been driving. Tony smiled at Loki, just a hint suggestive, as if he’d caught Loki ogling. “What about you?”

“On my floor, one of the apartments is rented as a guest house, and it’s empty most of the time. The other apartment is the blonde news anchor on channel six.”

“Christine Everhart?” Tony asked, surprised. “She’s hot.” Loki’s brow furrowed like that was confusing. “You don’t think so?” Tony asked.

“You haven’t met her in the elevator,” Loki said.

“What’s she like?”

“Snippy,” Loki decided. “I’ve seen tenants from other floors, but I don’t know them past

recognizing their faces.” They started down a long hallway that was empty aside from the artwork. “It’s fairly quiet.”

Tony frowned at the halved vase they were staring at. “How was your mom’s birthday dinner?”

“Good.” Loki rocked back on his feet, leather shoes creaking with the motion as he started towards the next vase. “She loved her tapestry. She was really thrilled,” he said, trying to play down the joy he felt at that. “Dinner went well. It was nice.”

“That’s good,” Tony said. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to ask more about Loki’s family. He knew Loki’s dad was scary. He knew he could only insult Thor if Loki was on a rant and wanted someone to agree with him, otherwise he’d get his ass handed to him. That sibling dynamic was one Tony didn’t have a point of reference for as an only child.

Loki brushed his hair back behind his ear. “Thor has recently started dating a woman that works at a research lab. He shared a picture of her. She is different from his usual type.”

“What’s her name?” Tony asked.

“Jane,” Loki said. With some amusement he added, “They met because she clipped him with her vespa when he was out jogging.” Tony was starting to ask if he was alright when Loki said, “He was perfectly fine. She just got him with her mirror.”

“I bet that hurt.”

“He seemed proud of the bruise.”

Tony nodded. He could see that.

The light caught Loki’s tie, shining down the silky fabric as he moved past one of the sweeping glass windows. It highlighted the angles in his nose and cheekbones, the soft shine to his hair, the sleek outlines of his shoulders beneath his jacket. He was stunning. He was always so. Stunning.

“She insisted on taking him to get it looked at, and he rode her vespa. I would’ve enjoyed seeing that,” Loki said. Tony laughed softly.

He was struggling to work out in his head why the hell Loki was still single. Well, aside from dating him. Tony wasn’t complaining, no, he was super grateful that Loki was available. It was just that it didn’t make sense. Who wouldn’t want Loki?

Hopefully Loki wasn’t like...a serial killer or something. That would sort of suck.

They came to the next installation, a series of abstract paintings on the glass. Tony liked the snowy garden outside behind the artwork better. Loki’s eyes wandered over the brushstrokes.

He didn’t seem like a serial killer. In fact, the only thing Tony could think of for Loki’s still being single was how...prickly he could be. But that was at work.

And Tony really, really couldn’t stand being curious.

“Hey, uh,” Tony started, eager. “Who’ve you been with before me?” His voice was bright and interested. Loki was staring outside. “Like, dated?” Tony tried to clarify, just incase Loki wasn’t getting it. He’d told Loki about some of his past relationships when they started becoming friends, but he’d never heard about any of Loki’s.

Loki linked his hands behind his back, studying the patterns on the glass. "I dated one of my friends the last year of high school," Loki said. "We broke up that summer. She wanted a fresh break when we went to different colleges." That seemed like a disappointing memory, but Loki didn't linger on it. "I haven't had anything serious since then," he said, daring a glance at Tony. The last statement seemed entirely indifferent.

Tony blinked up at him, surprised. "What about other guys?" Tony asked. He didn't care about Loki's high school girlfriend. He didn't think he'd be compared to her. But hot guys...well he couldn't really be blamed for being curious. Somebody had to have inspired some of the stuff in those fics besides just him.

"I only dated her long term," Loki said. The wind blew a dusting of snow off a few trees in the garden, the frost catching the light as they floated across the air.

"Well not like long term dating," Tony said. "Just flings with guys?" He wanted to know who had inspired those highly specific details in the lingerie scene. It'd been way too specific not to have happened.

"I haven't had any," Loki said.

"What?" It dropped out of Tony's mouth faster than he could think. "Wait. Never?" He cocked his head to the side, eyebrows furrowed like maybe Loki was setting him up for a joke. "How does that happen?" Loki pinched his lips together, still staring at the artwork.

Tony was so bewildered by the revelation that he didn't pick up on the flickers of distress in Loki's expression until it was too late. "I mean, you're smart and you're hot, so?"

"I was busy," Loki said lamely. Then Tony finally noticed the way Loki was withdrawing, ashamed and defensive.

Tony couldn't think of what to say fast enough when Loki was already turning to walk to the next installation. They stopped at a series of metal pipes arranged into bows. "Okay," Tony said, voice strained by sudden stress. "That's cool. I'm just surprised, that's all." He smiled at Loki.

Loki didn't see him because he was staring at the installation. He looked calm on the outside, but Tony could make out the signs of discomfort and panic on him too. "It's fine," Loki said.

Voices echoed in the next gallery over. Maybe this wasn't such a great place to have this discussion. "Do you like tapas?" Tony asked, scrambling for something else to talk about. Oops. Right. They'd already agreed on tapas after this.

"Yes," Loki said, a bit strained and cagey.

Tony decided to walk over to the next installation instead. "I think I could've made this," Tony said, pointing at the crisscrossing wires and the wrench that had been left to the side. "They didn't even bother to clean up after themselves."

Loki was quiet for a moment before his voice returned with hesitant but teasing humor. "Then you definitely could've made that."

"Hey," Tony complained, smiling and relieved.

They recovered after that, but the awkward blunder didn't leave Tony's consciousness. Now he was utterly bewildered. How was Loki even capable of writing things like that if he hadn't partaken in it at all? How was that possible when Loki was so desirable? Tony rubbed the back of

his neck and frowned at a pile of rubber ducks.

Tony turned up the heat in his car as they drove to eat. He glanced over at Loki, building up the nerve to say what he wanted to say.

“Hey, uh, Loki. About earlier.” Loki didn’t move, at least not with what Tony could see from the corner of his eye. “It’s okay with me that you haven’t been with another guy before.”

Loki was quiet for a moment before tersely saying, “Alright.” He didn’t seem to believe Tony.

“I was just kind of surprised since you’ve got the whole bodice ripper thing down so well.”

“As I said before,” Loki said, tense this time, “I hadn’t intended for you to read them.” He was embarrassed too. Shit.

“Yeah, no. I get it,” Tony said. His heart was beating faster, making it harder to stay as calm and nonchalant about it as he wanted to. He didn’t want to spook Loki. “I just kinda, I mean, I was trying to work out what kind of guy you’re attracted to.” Tony tried to explain it. “Like if I’m your type, or...I don’t know.”

They were quiet for a moment. The tires rolling along the pavement were unbearably loud. They hit a pothole and the whole car let out an irritated groan.

“I’ve never been partial to only women, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“It’s not,” Tony said. Fuck, this was awkward. It was intriguing too, because Tony just didn’t know any of this stuff about Loki. “I—” Maybe he’d lead and see if Loki followed. “—Thought you were hot the first time I saw you, but the pining for you thing didn’t really start until we’d been getting along.” That hadn’t taken them all that long, but it’d been a slow first few weeks until they’d really clicked all the way. “And we were friends and worked together, so I just dealt with it.”

Tony didn’t try to catch the next traffic signal, using the stop as a chance to drag out the car ride. They weren’t far from the restaurant. Loki set his hands together in his lap, running his fingertips over his knuckles.

“I didn’t feel attracted to you at first,” Loki said. Tony couldn’t bring himself to glance away from the road. “It was a few months before I did,” Loki said, trailing off. That was news. Asshole vibe or not, Tony probably would’ve said yes to sleeping with him the first time they’d met. Okay, well, maybe the second time but he’d always been hot.

“Oh. Well, I mean, I would’ve said yes to sex on the first day, but just because you were hot. I guess we’re just wired a little differently.” Tony didn’t want him to think that he was looking down on him or something. “That’s fine.”

Loki squeezed his own knee, staring out the window. They were silent for another minute. “If it makes you uncomfortable, I understand,” Loki said.

“No! No,” Tony said because it sounded like Loki was talking himself out of this again. “I was just curious.” He reached between them, patting Loki’s leg in reassurance. He’d never done that before. “We had a weird start, but I’m glad we started,” Tony said emphatically. “I’d take our dates over nursing my unrequited crush any day.” A soft breath fell from Loki’s lips. Tony glanced over to find a small smile on his lips.

“I’ll take dating you to writing about it any day,” Loki said. Tony got the impression that Loki needed him to know because Loki wanted to reassure him. Tony was just relieved that it was okay to talk casually about the fics now.

Tony perked up. “Have you written anything new since we’ve started dating?”

Loki turned his head away to look out the window.

“Heyyyy,” Tony said, excited. “That’s a yes. Can I read it? Can I?”

“No,” Loki said, batting away the hand that was reaching for his arm. Tony cracked up and laughed until Loki protested. “Okay. Okay, Tony, that’s enough.” It was light at first, then there was a note of authority that sent an alarming wave of arousal through Tony. “Enough.” Tony swallowed down his laughter.

They had just parked outside of the restaurant. “One chapter,” Loki suddenly confessed. “And I’m trying not to write about you anymore.” He clearly felt ashamed of doing it. He quickly added, “And you can’t read it.” Loki started to get out of the car.

“I’d like to read it,” Tony said. He shut his car door, speaking to Loki over the roof of the car. Loki’s cheeks were flushed again, and he was staring elsewhere self-consciously. “You can write about me,” Tony said. “I don’t mind.” It was hot. Hell, now that the secret had been out and they were dating again, Tony couldn’t have cared less. He was thankful that Loki had written them.

“Tony,” Loki said wearily.

“I don’t mind,” Tony assured him. “You have carte blanche to write about me however you want.” He walked up to the sidewalk, waiting for Loki. “Let’s go eat. I’m starving.”

Loki followed him inside and they talked about the menu and then TV shows and everything that they normally did. The only difference was that Tony didn’t try to hide his sloppy, fond looks towards Loki, and Loki didn’t try to hide how flustered and proud those made him. Well, maybe he did try. But Tony knew.

Tony wasn’t sure what he expected when he parked to drop Loki off. He certainly wasn’t expecting for Loki to turn to him, emboldened, and say with an uneasy twinge in his voice, “You probably want to come upstairs. Would you like to?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. He grabbed Loki’s hand, noting the surprise in Loki’s eyes as he did. “I would. Not gonna lie about that. But I kind of feel like tonight would be about proving something, and it doesn’t have to be.” Man, Tony was going to kick himself for it later, but he was sure. He was absolutely sure. “I’m in love with you. I’ll still be in love with you tomorrow.”

Loki blushed, turning away. “Tony,” he mumbled. Tony couldn’t make out the next part except for, “So adorable,” in a frustrated and besotted tone. Loki licked his lips, looking everywhere but Tony a moment before turning to him with confidence. “I will still be in love with you tomorrow too,” he said. “Maybe you should leave me with some inspiration to write about?”

Tony’s eyes lit up. Loki wasn’t just acknowledging the fic—he was embracing Tony’s enthusiasm and also *being such a turn on about it*. “Hell yeah,” Tony said. He leaned in towards Loki’s seat to find Loki already meeting him halfway, Loki’s hand grabbing a fistful of his shirt as his lips slotted over Tony’s bottom one and sent a shiver racing down Tony’s spine. A minty tongue teased at the seam of his lips and Tony let out a delighted moan, reaching out to curl his hand around the back of

Loki's neck as he let Loki in with surprised joy.

Tony ran his fingers through Loki's long, soft hair. The hand at his chest didn't let up, his shirt pulled taut like Loki was desperate not to lose him. Tony let out a breathy groan, incapable of holding back. Loki's lips broke away, cool air taking their place, and just as Tony was about to blink open his eyes and gasp for breath, they were back, sucking Tony's bottom lip with a quick nip before letting go.

Then it was time for Tony to blink his eyes open and grin at Loki. "You're a good kisser," he told Loki.

Loki smirked. "You are too," he breathed out. His hold on Tony's shirt slackened.

"Is that enough to write about?" Tony asked.

Loki pouted his lips to the side. Tony wanted them again. "Once more," Loki decided. "Just to be sure I got everything."

"I wouldn't want you to miss anything," Tony said, closing the distance between them. He ran his fingers through Loki's hair and down his shoulders, clinging to him as Loki's warm mouth lavished him with the kind of affection that made Tony's head spin. A sheen caught Loki's lips in the dim lighting the second time they pulled apart. They untangled, both understanding that they were about to call it a night.

"I had a good time," Loki said.

"Me too." Loki started to get up, but Tony reached over and grabbed his hand. He gave it a squeeze. "See you tomorrow." Loki nodded, expression soft. Tony watched him go with the same lovesick expression as last time, but there was awe in it too.

Chapter 16

It was late afternoon when Loki came downstairs. Tony's fingers were flying across his keyboard, finishing up requests for the company website. Loki casually took a seat on the couch and let Tony finish.

"Did you hear anything about that asshole manager?" Tony asked, rushing to finish off his last line of code.

Loki's gaze drifted to the side in thought. "Which one?" He asked.

"Which one?!" Tony's mouth dropped open like Loki was messing with him. "The one on the third floor that was playing online poker? I ratted him out to HR and they said he'd be getting some sort of disciplinary thing." Tony had been really pleased with that phone call.

Loki's shoulders slumped. He didn't seem impressed at all. "I haven't heard anything about it," Loki said. "And I wouldn't expect to. He did what I asked." Loki set his ankle over his knee, crossing his legs. "Tony," he said, almost soothingly. "It was hardly something to get worked up about. That man is the least of my problems."

Tony set his jaw. That didn't make him feel better. "I watched a few more episodes of Star Trek," Loki said. "I haven't seen the tribbles one yet, but I watched 'Shore Leave' last night—" Tony's cell phone rang, cutting Loki off.

Tony glanced at the massive pile of stuff on his desk. He shuffled through the top layer of paper but his phone wasn't there. Standing up out of his chair, Tony took a step back so that he could yank the top desk drawer out all the way. There it was.

Tony grabbed it, meaning to put it on silent. He froze when saw the name on the ID.

"What's wrong?" Loki asked, alert.

Tony stared at the phone, debating. He didn't want to take the fucker's call, but maybe something was wrong. What if his mom was in the hospital or something? Loki got up off the couch, stalking towards Tony's desk. "It's my dad," Tony explained. The screen dimmed as the call went to voice mail, only to light up again with a second attempt.

Loki had gone tense. Tony knew he needed to answer. His dad wouldn't call unless he absolutely had to. Tony avoided looking at Loki as he picked up. "Hello?"

"Tony." He recoiled at his name on his father's tongue. "Have you gone off and made a big shot of yourself yet? I've always told you, Stark men—" Tony held his hand over the receiver, pulling the racket away from his ear.

"He's drunk," Tony whispered. The worst part about Howard was that he didn't slur or lose his balance or even get red faced. The only way that Tony could tell that he was drunk was by the shit that came out of his mouth. This fit the bill. He glanced at the clock. "It's not even five yet," he said, as if it was really a surprise after all these years. Then, Tony wondered why he'd told Loki this. It was embarrassing.

He dared a glance back in Loki's direction and was completely unprepared for the gentle sympathy on Loki's face, and the firm certainty that quickly followed. "Hang up."

“What?” Tony asked, pressing his hand harder to the phone. Instinctively, the idea made him feel guilty.

“Hang up,” Loki repeated, holding Tony’s gaze with an assertive sureness that lent Tony confidence. Still, he wavered, Howard’s voice muffled between them. “There’s no reason for you to listen to him.”

Loki was right. Tony knew he was right. How many times in his life had he wanted to hang up? Tony stared down at the phone. They could both hear Howard going off about something. This time it involved women and some expo. Tony glanced back up at Loki. He was still there, still watching Tony with the same reassuring and certain stare.

Tony swiped the call off, setting the phone on silent.

“Asshole,” he muttered, dropping the phone onto the desk. He smiled glibly at Loki, trying to hide the sudden ache in his chest and the nervous anticipation that always went along with talking to his father. He hated how Howard could still get to him with one tiny thing. “Sorry about that. I guess I should’ve—” Loki came around the desk, pulling Tony into his arms.

Tony fell against his chest, stunned.

Holy—he smelled *good*. And he was warm. And he was combing his fingers through Tony’s hair and resting his head against Tony’s like they’d done this before. For a moment, Tony closed his eyes, breathing in. Then, tentatively, Tony reached out and curled his arms around Loki.

Tony melted into it, marveling at how the tension faded from his chest and was replaced by something warm and safe.

They stayed like that until Loki let go, taking a shallow step back. “He’s not your problem, Tony.”

Tony crossed his arms low over his stomach. “Yeah,” he said dismissively.

“Nothing you’ve ever said about that man has endeared him to me,” Loki said. Slowly, Tony recognized that Loki was pissed at his father. Hah, that’d probably be a fun fight to watch. Tony felt perfectly certain that Loki would win. “He doesn’t have any right to call you at work, or any time, really.”

Tony forced another smile for Loki, trying to be appreciative. Sure, he’d love to flip the old man both birds and never see him again. But it wasn’t that simple. “Yeah.”

“Would you like to go get dinner?” Loki asked brightly. Tony was relieved that he was dropping it. “We can go to that cafe from before or try somewhere new. We’ll be off work in a little while anyway.”

Tony perked up. “Sure.” Actually, that sounded perfect. “There’s a burger place near my apartment that’s good. I can text you the address.”

“I’ll meet you there right after work?” Loki asked. Tony nodded. “Tony,” Loki said, lingering for a moment. Then, whatever he wanted to say, he seemed to change his mind. “This place had better have burgers that taste better than the one from your fridge.”

“That was a leftover and you weren’t supposed to eat it,” Tony complained. Okay, he’d told Loki that he could have it, but that’d kind of been because he’d wanted to give it to him. “You know you don’t like onions and I told you they were on it. You ate it anyway.”

“Thor had ordered Italian subs for the fifth Friday in a row,” Loki said, gunning for sympathy. Tony fought down the smile that was tugging at his lips, trying to glower instead.

“Go back upstairs before somebody misses you.”

“Fine,” Loki said. “Since apparently nobody down here misses me.” As he started to pout, Tony rolled his eyes. He gave Loki’s arm a nudge.

“I’ll text you the directions.”

“Fine,” Loki said, still acting put out. He left with his usual arrogant swagger, Tony watching him while shaking his head and ignoring the fondness he felt.

Loki was waiting inside, holding his wool coat in his arms, when Tony got there. It was warm and noisy. “We have to wait for a table,” Loki said.

Tony scanned the room, checking for any familiar faces. He lived just far enough from work that he didn’t really worry about it too much. “Figures,” Tony said, leaning against Loki to get away from the cold wind that blew in each time the door opened. They were backed up to the wall in the small alcove between the entrance and the hostess stand.

“At least the food smells good.”

“Yeah, it’s so they can torture us while we wait,” Tony said. He thought nothing of huddling closer to Loki as the door flew wide open and let in a party of eight. Tony glared at them as the space became too crowded.

For a few minutes they stood in silence. Tony was hungry and slightly grumpy, but Loki had a placid, almost content look on his face. Finally, they were called to be seated. Tony slid into the booth and gave his order without looking at the menu. It took Loki a little while longer.

At least they’d gotten a spot in the corner of the restaurant. The booth was mostly secluded, but the whole place was loud. Tony kind of liked the noise. There was a bar showing a game with a full crowd and tables with large groups. Loki leaned his elbows against the table and set his chin on his interlocked fingers. “This is going to be better than what I had for dinner yesterday,” he said.

“What was that?” Tony asked, swiveling around from watching a waiter carry an tray of oversized burgers and fries.

“Food out of the vending machine,” Loki answered. “I had to stay late to finish writing reports.”

“Kamala says the new machine’s got peanut butter candy.”

“It also has dark chocolate blueberries,” Loki said with a smile in his voice. Man, everybody knew what was up with the vending machine except for him. He had to get on it.

The waitress dropped off their appetizer. Tony’s mouth watered at the sight of the fries, loaded with cheese and bacon bits. He broke off a chunk, then pushed the plate towards Loki. “You take some.”

“These are very greasy,” Loki commented as he pried one out of the stack. It wasn’t a complaint though.

Tony shoved three more in his mouth. He hadn't realized that he'd been starving. "Loaded pub fries are a panacea," Tony said. "They're good for you."

Loki breathed out a soft laugh. "Right, Tony."

"Whatever Mr. Dark Chocolate Blueberries."

"I didn't say I didn't like them," Loki said. Now that Tony was eating, he was in a good mood and felt daring. He found Loki's foot under the table and gave it a playful nudge.

Loki grinned back at him with a mischievous glint in his eye. "We discussed buying a coffee shop franchise and sticking it on the first floor, but I was pleased that it fell through. What would I do without the excuse that I was getting coffee a couple of blocks away?" Loki's foot nudged his ankle. Tony coughed on the water he was sipping when he realized Loki was wearing just his sock.

Tony took a breath, quickly recovering. "I'm sure you'd come up with something else," Tony said. His shoes were laced on and he didn't dare to try taking them off. He knew he couldn't get them back on gracefully. Nudging the shoe on Loki's other foot, Tony said, "You could always say you ran out to buy cigarettes."

"True," Loki said, like that was some genius idea all while he was brushing his toe against the soft spot on Tony's ankle that his sneaker didn't protect. "But it's not quite as enjoyable as carrying back coffee. Thor complains when I don't buy him one."

"And you rub it in his face like the sweet little brother you are," Tony said, remembering one of Loki's phone calls. Loki's grin became wicked, his toe nudging at the gap between Tony's jeans and leg.

"Only as much as he deserves," Loki said. Tony hooked their ankles together for a moment, grinning at the bright spark in Loki's expression from the action. "Mysteriously, he never thinks to go on a coffee run, but when I go, suddenly he needs one," Loki said, his voice leaping across the words for dramatic effect.

Tony smiled at him, his foot going still for a moment. This was the smart ass he'd fallen in love with.

"What does he order?" Tony asked. "Please tell me it's a unicorn frappe thing."

"No," Loki said, smirking a bit. "It's always something with a shot of espresso that's only mildly sweet." The waitress appeared with their food and Loki's foot retreated. For a moment they both simply ate, hungry.

"What were you two like growing up?" Tony asked. He'd heard a couple of stories, but he didn't have the full picture. Mostly of the time he got to hear about how Thor had pissed Loki off about something.

"Wild," Loki decided. "I don't know how my mother got through it." He took a bite from his burger as Tony nudged his foot again, Loki's eyes darting towards him in a way that screamed the challenge had been accepted. "Did I ever tell you about the time Thor let a snake loose in the reptile house?"

"No," Tony said, feeling like he'd been robbed.

"Our parents had let us wander ahead, which was always a terrible idea," Loki said. "There was a cage with a boa constrictor, and Thor was boasting about how he wanted to pick it up, so I dared

him to touch it.”

“But there was glass separating you, right?” Tony was leaning forward with rapt attention as he ate.

“Right,” Loki said. “But there was an unmarked door beside the exhibit that I knew the zookeepers had to use, so I told him to try it, thinking it was locked.” As Loki said it, his foot still teasing him, Tony saw how very easy it would be to be persuaded by this man. “It wasn’t. Thor opened it and before I’d said anything, I saw him through the glass, opening up the slot that they used to feed the snake.”

“What’d you do?” Tony asked, trying to imagine the young brothers reactions.

“I gestured at him to get out, but the idiot stuck his hand inside. Then I heard our parents and tapped on the glass, trying to get his attention. He saw them rounding the corner just in time and burst out of there.”

“Did he touch the snake?” Tony asked.

“Yes,” Loki said reluctantly, still bitter that Thor had won that bet. “We managed to get to the next exhibit before our parents noticed us, but when we looked back at the cage, the snake was slithering out of the slot that Thor had forgotten to shut.”

“How long did it take the zoo to figure out that it was loose?”

“About five minutes,” Loki said. “We heard a shout and instead of sticking around to get in trouble, we left the reptile house just as we saw two zookeepers run in with their walkie talkies going off about the snake.”

“You didn’t get caught, did you?” Tony was sure he already knew the answer.

“Nope,” Loki said proudly.

Tony smiled, proud of him too. Loki went to take a bite of his burger as Tony stared at him, unabashedly fond and happy.

It was then that it sort of clicked.

This was still the Loki that he loved. It’d been kind of tough admitting the whole feelings for each other thing, but they could still talk to each other and tease each other and be the way they’d been as friends. It was just now Tony could play footsie with him too. And feel his heart skip a couple beats that night when Loki leaned in for a goodbye kiss before they went their separate ways home. And text him goodnight, knowing Loki was typing back with the same soft, affectionate expression on his face as he was.

He couldn’t wait for their next date.

Chapter 17

When Loki picked Tony up for their second third date, he was as impeccably dressed as ever. Tony was getting used to the expectation that Loki would be, but he was still wowed every time.

Today Loki had opted for a slim navy blue tie with a silver tie pin, tucked under his suit vest. It peeked out from his unbuttoned coat. Loki's car was warm, and Tony found himself unzipping his puffer jacket. "I haven't been to this thing before," Tony said.

"I haven't either." Loki turned on his blinker, changing lanes. "It seemed more entertaining than a movie, though." Tony nodded his head. He'd rather be dodging carolers and getting free apple cider than watching a movie. They were going to the art district where local shops were throwing a holiday fest.

"I re-read your letter," Loki said. Tony whipped his head around to look at him. There was a small grin on Loki's face. That was entirely unexpected. "And I thought, you told me *some* of your kinks, but not in the same volume as mine." It was almost mischievous the way he said it. Tony's brain needed a second to catch up.

"So what," Tony said, tugging at his shirt collar. "You want me to—tell you—some?" Man, it was really too hot in the car.

"Would you?" Loki asked.

Tony's eyebrows flinched together, but he found a smile sneaking up onto his face. He wasn't even entirely sure why. "What do you want to know?" Tony asked, curious. He liked that Loki was showing interest. He liked it a lot.

Loki shrugged, casually staring out the windshield. They were quiet for a moment as Tony thought about it. What could he share without it being too much? "I told you—" Loki started lightly.

"—And now you want to know about me," Tony finished for him. Loki didn't correct him. Tony ran a hand through his hair. "You said there were things you wrote that were just fantasies," Tony thought aloud. "How do you know you'll like the ones you like if you haven't done them?"

"I don't," Loki said simply. He held up his pointer finger. "And you're avoiding the question."

Tony grinned at being caught. Loki had him there. "What I like," Tony said brightly, like he didn't get the question.

"Yes."

Tony didn't know why he was getting embarrassed now. "Well," Tony said. He looked out the window. "I like blowjobs."

Loki breathed out a laugh. "Bravo, Tony. That's revolutionary."

"Hey!" Tony gave his arm a playful shove and Loki burst into laughter, not holding it back anymore. "Fine, alright. I'll tell you something, but you have to tell me something that's *not* in what I read." Tony crossed his arms, feeling daring and triumphant and like a damn genius.

Loki pressed his lips together. He seemed to debate it for a moment before agreeing, "Alright." Tony loved this game. "But you have to go first."

Tony hummed. “That means whatever yours is, it’s really something,” Tony said. “And you’re just waiting to see if mine comes close to that level before you share it.”

Loki blushed, even as he vehemently insisted, “It is not. I just want to make sure you won’t back out.”

“No you don’t,” Tony said. He knew it was bullshit, just like Loki knew it was.

Flustered Loki asked, “Are you going to take the deal or not?”

“I am,” Tony said. He tapped a finger against his lips, making a big show out of thinking about it. He glanced over at Loki. His eyes were on the road, but he was listening attentively, his fingers gripping the steering wheel a fraction too tight. “Okay. Blindfolded. In someone’s lap as they get me off. On camera.” Tony ignored the heat on his face. “Which I’ve done.”

Loki had gone still. He didn’t seem to believe it. His cheeks were turning a charming shade of red that Tony reveled in. It wasn’t fair to Loki that he was so pale and every little flush showed in full, but Tony didn’t feel that sorry for him. “So,” Tony said. “What’s yours?”

Loki cleared his throat, focusing extra hard on the road ahead. “Do you still have that video?”

“Answer yours and maybe I’ll tell you,” Tony said, a bit of sing-song in his voice. Loki pouted for a split second before taking a breath.

Loki said it quickly, like he was going to lose his nerve if he didn’t. Tony found that endearing. “I just want to be tossed onto my stomach and taken from behind, held in place.” Loki took a steadying breath through his nose, and as always he was good at getting that cool veneer back on, but Tony wasn’t fooled.

“So you do have a submissive side,” Tony said, slightly amazed but mostly excited because he liked that despite reading all of Loki’s stuff, there were things he didn’t know.

“I hardly see why I should limit myself,” Loki said.

Tony nodded. “Good point. Smart.” They were about to turn down the street that would lead to parking, and Tony was disappointed that the game was going to end. They could come back to it later, though.

“What about the video?” Loki asked, drawing Tony out of his thoughts.

“Oh. Yeah. I don’t have it,” Tony said. “We recorded it on my camera and I deleted it later.” The filming itself had been way hotter than awkwardly looking back at the video months later and realizing he didn’t like the girl in it or the way his face looked as he came. He glanced over at Loki. “It’d probably be a dumb idea to keep something like that lying around.”

“Probably,” Loki echoed. They turned down the street.

Tony zipped his jacket back up. He was impressed with Loki. “You’ve got a lot of guts for a guy that’s only kissed me,” he observed, mocking but teasing.

Loki scoffed. “You’ve got a lot of guts for a guy that’s only kissed me,” he said, turning Tony’s words back on him.

When Tony glanced back at Loki he was smiling, and Tony was too. That little shit was his best friend, and Tony was starting to wonder why he ever thought adding sexuality would change that.

There wasn't much in the shops that Tony was interested in, but he did weigh in when Loki kicked around the idea of getting a necklace for his mother's Christmas gift. Currently, they'd wandered their way into an artisan soap shop that made Tony want to sneeze. At least it was warmer than outside.

They were both looking at a tower of hand soaps. "Do you think this stuff actually works, or does it just crumble apart?" Tony wondered, turning over a pine scented bar.

"Loki!"

Tony froze. He knew that voice. Loki definitely knew that voice. Thor was somewhere in the shop behind them.

Chapter 18

“Loki!” Thor exclaimed, clasping Loki’s shoulder. Tony held himself very still, facing forward. Maybe if he didn’t turn around, Thor wouldn’t notice him. Maybe Thor wouldn’t recognize him at all. “What are you doing here?”

Loki turned around, disappearing from the corner of Tony’s eye. “I was looking for Mother’s gift,” Loki said smoothly, his voice giving away nothing and only implying that seeing Thor was a pleasant surprise.

“He’s the thoughtful one,” Thor said fondly. Tony’s heart was pounding.

“I try,” Loki said politely. Tony took a step to the side, away, still keeping his face towards the row of soaps. He was holding his breath without meaning to.

“Loki’s always been mother’s favorite,” Thor said. Tony didn’t detect any bitterness in Thor’s voice, but he also wasn’t hearing much past the heartbeat in his ears. No one was looking at him, so Tony carefully navigated between a woman’s oversized purse and two men debating a candle. Tony only glanced back when he was near the door of the shop, and that was only to reorient himself.

Loki was smiling broadly, a picture of perfect congeniality as Thor joked with him about something. Tony bit his lip.

This was bad, but it wasn’t bad-bad. He was getting out of here. They weren’t caught.

And Loki was a brilliant liar. If Tony hadn’t known, he never would’ve thought that Loki was in distress. That had to come in handy in the boardroom. Tony bit his lip again, as a woman pushed past him to get to a display stand.

Tony slipped outside.

Icy wind blew against his jacket, biting at the bare skin of his exposed neck. He dug his hands into his pockets. Should he wait for Loki or go somewhere else?

The wind picked up a drift of snow from the sidewalk, flurries cutting across Tony’s cheeks as he braced himself against it. He needed to find a place indoors if he was going to wait.

Then suddenly, quietly, the reality of the situation hit him.

Here he was, hiding. Hiding because this had to be a secret. Hiding because he liked what they had going on and he didn’t want it to be jeopardized. But wasn’t that fucked up? Didn’t that suck?

They couldn’t do this forever. If this was going to work out long term, and Tony certainly hoped it wasn’t going to end any time soon, then they couldn’t do this forever. They couldn’t wait for Loki to take over the company or whatever he was planning that would make this work. Tony knew he’d have to quit. It sunk in his chest and lodged there, the weight of it dragging his good mood to the ground.

“Shit,” Tony muttered to himself. With a heavy sigh he started down the street, deciding he couldn’t take the cold any longer. He didn’t hear the bells ring on the soap shop’s door. “Hey,” a familiar voice said. Loki caught up to him, his puffs of breath visible in the wintry air. “I’ll meet you back at the car?” It was almost apologetic, but Tony wasn’t upset. He was just relieved that

Loki was there.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “I’ll meet you there.”

“Okay,” Loki said quietly, walking past Tony like he was a stranger and cutting down an alley. Tony wandered on for a little while before he crossed the street and back tracked.

They were keeping this thing a secret by the skin of their teeth. How long was their luck going to last?

Tony stared down at the ground. He didn’t want to lose his job or Loki’s smoke breaks.

But he didn’t want Loki to suffer for him either.

Tony didn’t care about the company, not really. It was just Loki that he cared about. He could get an IT job anywhere. But if Loki’s shot at CEO was ruined, Loki would be devastated. Tony tried to shove the thoughts away. He’d just wanted to go out on a good date.

Loki was already in the car with the engine running and the heat on when Tony got there. Tony hurried in, grateful for the warmth.

“I’m sorry.” Tony glanced over. Loki’s hands were tense against the steering wheel, but he was staring at Tony with absolute sincerity. “It didn’t seem to be the kind of thing for Thor to go to, but he had Jane with him so...I’m sorry we had to end it early.”

Tony shrugged. “Don’t be. I’m just glad we didn’t get caught.”

Loki smiled, but it was worried.

“Would Thor chew you out if he knew?” Tony asked, curious.

Loki shook his head, backing them out of the parking space. “To be honest, I think it would thrill him. He thinks I keep my relationships secret from him, even when I’ve insisted there wasn’t anyone.” Loki took off down the street a little over the speed limit. “But if he knows we’re together then he’ll be able to work out where I am on my smoke breaks, and all it’ll take is him wanting something and coming down there to see me a couple of times for the secret to get out.”

Tony knew that from when they were only friends. He just hadn’t known how Thor would feel about them dating.

“Do you think he saw me?” Tony asked.

“He didn’t recognize you,” Loki said. “That’s part of why I’ve been adamant that you not come upstairs unless absolutely necessary.” Tony slumped against his seat. “If anyone sees us, we’ll tell them that we’re friends. They won’t be able to prove otherwise if we’re simply out together.”

“That’s not an air tight plan,” Tony pointed out.

Loki was quiet for a moment. “I know,” he said, sounding stressed.

Tony didn’t tell him that he knew he’d have to quit. He wasn’t ready to take that step yet, even if he knew that he had to. He didn’t want to think about it.

Loki squeezed the steering wheel then eased up, turning down a side street. “I nearly had a heart attack when I heard him,” Loki said, lighter.

“Me too,” Tony said. The tension was gone. “If he’d seen the look on my face, there’s no way that he wouldn’t have known something was up.”

Loki let out a laugh. “I thought he was going to drag me along on their date with him,” he said. “I wasn’t sure what my excuse was going to be. Thank goodness Jane helped me excuse myself from that.”

“You were smooth though,” Tony said. “I never would’ve known you were lying about getting a gift for your mom.”

“It was half true,” Loki said. He dropped back against his seat, more at ease. “I have to admit my nerves are shot. I will be looking over my shoulder for all of dinner.”

“My nerves are shot too,” Tony said. “I’d be up for getting fast food and eating back at my place or something.” Tony rubbed his nose. “Or somewhere that a work acquaintance isn’t going to pop out of the woodwork at least,” he added, because he’d really rather be at Loki’s but he didn’t want to seem pushy.

“I—have the better TV,” Loki volunteered.

“Your place it is then,” Tony said, hoping his enthusiasm didn’t show too much. Tony relaxed in his seat, but his heart still picked up a few extra beats.

Tony liked riding the elevator with Loki up to his floor. He was still nervous about being seen, but there was something about it that made him feel important. When they got into the apartment, Loki politely excused himself for a moment to clean a pile of papers from the coffee table and a few other things while Tony made himself at home on the couch.

Then they ate fast food while watching another Star Trek episode together. If Tony hadn’t known it was explicitly a date, he’d never have guessed because it felt perfectly comfortable. They were joking and teasing and hanging out like it was just any other day. It was nice. Tony appreciated it.

When the episode ended, Loki’s held up the remote but didn’t immediately start the next one. Tony glanced outside. “It’s snowing.”

Loki was quiet for a moment. “So it is.” Heavy snowflakes raced past the window. “Would you like some tea, or—I have juice?” Loki guessed, remembering how little Tony cared for tea.

“Sure,” Tony said. Loki grabbed their food wrappers and disappeared into the kitchen.

Tony sank back into the spot he’d warmed up on the couch, feeling utterly content. He listened to the clattering of cups in the kitchen. Running into Thor had thrown off the rhythm of the day, but it wasn’t bad. Tony was thrilled by the date anyway.

“Here,” Loki said, returning with two glasses. His fingertips brushed against Tony’s as he handed it over. Tony almost thought it was intentional. He hoped so, bringing the glass to his lips to hide his smile.

“Thanks,” Tony said as Loki started the next episode.

Loki nodded, propping his feet up on the coffee table. Tony watched without seeing the screen, building himself up for what he’d already decided to do.

Tony slid across the couch, leaning against Loki's side. Loki was still for a split second before his whole body relaxed, one arm coming around Tony's shoulders.

Tony felt like a million bucks.

The sun had begun to set and it was still snowing outside. They'd decided not to watch another episode, but neither of them had suggested what to do instead. Tony had got up and gone to the bathroom. When he came back, Loki hadn't moved. "It's getting late," Loki observed, following Tony's gaze to the window.

"Yeah." Tony rubbed the back of his neck. The forecast hadn't said anything about snow. "Are you sure you feel safe driving in this?"

Loki frowned at the glass. "I don't want to make you feel stranded here." He reached for his tie. "I can handle it if you need to go home."

Tony stood awkwardly a few paces away from the couch. He didn't want to push Loki. "I'm okay," he said as neutrally as possible.

Loki turned to him, his expression unreadable. "Would you like to stay?" He asked. Tony's stomach flipped. "You did allow me to stay at your place. It's only fair that I return the favor." There was hope in Loki's expression, and his asking impressed Tony.

Tony restrained himself from grinning like an idiot. "Yeah." The smile slipped through anyway. "I'd feel better not picturing you driving back in this too."

"Okay," Loki said, trying to hold back a soft smile.

Expectant, almost awkward silence settled between them.

Loki rose. "I'll see if I can't find you something to sleep in."

Tony took a step towards him, heart beating faster. "Does this mean I get to see your bedroom?" Loki paused for a split second, but Tony couldn't read his expression. "Is it a mess?" Tony asked hopefully. Loki let out a derisive sigh, rolling his eyes as he looked back over his shoulder.

"No. It is not," he said.

"I bet you've got something in there you don't want me to see. What is it? A life sized poster of a boyband?" Loki decided to ignore him, walking past Tony and towards the bedroom. Tony followed like an overexcited puppy.

"Here," Loki said dully, pushing open the door. "Happy?"

The bed was unmade, the sheets twisted into an awful mess. It was loaded with soft throw blankets though. The rest of the room wasn't a mess per se, but it wasn't as spotless as Loki's living room. There were books crammed onto the shelves, stacks of paper on his desk and a half dozen pens scattered about, along with tons of artwork on the walls. It was cozy. Loki pulled open a closet door, disappearing into a huge walk-in closet.

There was also a master bath that wasn't exactly visible through the cracked door. Tony really wanted to explore it, but the knickknacks scattered across the room were intriguing too. Tony was still gawking when Loki emerged. "Here," he said, extending a folded square lump of clothes.

Tony took them just as he noticed a small, amused smirk creeping up onto Loki's lips. "You're so short, I didn't know if—"

"—Hey!" Tony cut him off. "Shove it." He glared at Loki before taking a step towards the master bathroom. Then he decided to make a beeline for it before Loki could protest. Tony whistled as he pushed open the door. "This thing is huge!"

Loki stopped at the doorframe like a vampire that hadn't been invited in. "You're going to change already? It's not even close to—"

"That is the biggest bathtub I've ever seen in my life!" Tony walked up to the edge. It was sleek black and deep, with a set of steps leading around the side. There were used candles on the far edge. They were placed in holders made of some sort of geode. "Wow. Is that a jar of bath bombs? And those are the fluffiest gold towels I've ever seen, are you sure you don't run like a home network show on the side?"

Loki was standing with one shoulder against the doorframe, arms crossed as he grinned in spite of himself. "Are you done spying on my bathroom?"

"Spying? I'm not spying. I'm changing my clothes." Loki politely took a step back from the door. It was funny and uncomfortable at the same time. Tony didn't see a need to be so polite. "A gold framed mirror and double sinks," Tony announced, throwing the borrowed clothes on the counter as he inspected the granite sinks. He was out of Loki's view now, his voice echoing. "What's this leaf thing?"

"That's an aloe vera plant," Loki said flatly, still somewhere outside the door.

"How do you keep the countertop so clean?"

Tony couldn't see Loki's reaction, and that was probably for the best.

"If you're going to keep rambling, I might as well get something together for dinner in the kitchen," Loki said, his voice trailing away.

"I'm not hungry," Tony called. "Why don't you change into your pajamas?"

Tony wandered back in view of the door as Loki returned to the bedroom. "Pajama party," Tony informed him.

Loki stared at him a moment before something gave in. "Fine. But I am going to make hot chocolate for dessert, even if you aren't hungry."

Tony leered at him. "Hot chocolate's romantic."

Loki rolled his eyes. "Please change," he said. Tony knew if he teased a little more he'd work out the laugh that was lurking under Loki's exasperated tone. Loki turned on his heel though, and Tony's nervous rambling had been miraculously soothed. He found himself actually closing the door as Loki went towards the kitchen.

Tony wandered over to the mirror, slowly pulling his shirt off. He grabbed the pile of black silk that Loki had given him, thinking that was just the pants. Those slunk down onto the floor while Tony stared at the remaining shirt in his hand. It had a collar trimmed in silver, with silver buttons and cuffed sleeves and a pocket and everything. It was easy to imagine that it'd look good on Loki—but on him, Tony tried not to laugh. It was going to be ridiculous.

But he'd kind of already committed to the pajama thing so he pulled it over his head.

Tony undid the top button so it didn't feel stuffy, but since it was a bit long the opening slipped down just enough that his pecs peaked out. He felt like a calendar model.

He dropped his pants to the floor and pulled on the silk bottoms, drawing them up over his hips and trying to make it so that he wouldn't step on the bottom hems every time he walked.

Tony admired himself in the mirror, spinning around so that he could admire the way it draped off of him.

It wasn't like Loki could complain. Tony grinned at the idea of Loki squirming uncomfortably at the sight of him. Gathering up his clothes, Tony set them on the spacious sink counter before eagerly wandering out into the living room. Something metallic was clinking in the kitchen.

Tony found Loki frowning at a saucepan on the stove. He glanced up as he heard Tony enter. His eyes immediately went to Tony's chest before wandering down and snapping up guiltily. "What do you think?" Tony asked, damn well knowing the answer.

"Do they fit?" Loki asked politely.

Tony was torn between sassing him and rubbing it in. He decided to go for the later. Tony slowly turned around. "Do they look alright?" He asked, glancing back over his shoulder to catch Loki's flustered expression.

"Yes," Loki said, voice straining for a moment before he hid his face by pulling open a cabinet door.

Tony decided to let him off the hook. He grabbed a seat at Loki's kitchen table. "Are you making it from scratch?" Tony asked. "I thought you didn't really cook."

Loki held up a jar of instant mix. "I don't," he said. "This way just tastes better." Tony hummed. "I'm going to go change, don't let this boil over."

"Alright, boss."

Somehow, Loki managed to keep his back to Tony as he exited the kitchen. Tony leaned back in his chair, hoping that he hadn't been too much. He didn't really have anything to do in Loki's gorgeous ass kitchen though, so he got up and went to the stove.

He could make hot chocolate just as easily as the next guy. Tony grabbed the can, reading the label just so that he'd have something to do.

It didn't take long. Tony pulled open a couple of cabinets until he found the mugs and grabbed two, setting them down as he looked for marshmallows. They weren't in the pantry like he expected, but there was a half empty bag where the hot cocoa can had been. Maybe it was Loki's stress food.

Tony had just finished stuffing the mugs with marshmallows when Loki walked in. Tony made a show out of checking him out. "Where do you even find green pajamas?" Tony asked. Did he have a silk set in every color?

"These were a gift from my mother for the holidays one year." Loki stopped when he saw that Tony had already made the hot chocolate.

“It was easy,” Tony said before he could ask. Loki smiled, taking the seat across from him.

He took a sip, easily snatching the marshmallows from the top. “Did you want to watch another episode tonight?” Loki asked. It felt a lot later than it actually was with the early sunset.

Tony pursed his lips. “Do you have any games or anything?”

“Like boardgames?”

“Yeah.”

Loki thought for a moment. “I have a pack of playing cards,” he said.

“Let’s do that,” Tony immediately said. “Do you know how to play poker?”

Loki gave him a look that said it all. “What do you want to play for?”

Strip poker immediately came to mind, but Tony didn’t want to push Loki like that. “A truth?” Tony suggested. “If I win you have to answer one of my questions, and if you win, I have to answer one of yours?”

“Deal,” Loki said. He got up with a devious look in his eyes. It was Tony’s turn to squirm.

Tony won the first hand easily. Loki scoffed at his cards, dumping them onto the table like it’d been personal. He grabbed his hot cocoa to sip as Tony mulled over his question.

“Do you like to kiss me?”

Loki didn’t glance up from his mug. “Yes.”

Tony waited, but nothing else came. “That’s it?” He’d been hoping for details or a blush or something.

“You’re the one that asked a yes or no question,” Loki said, obviously pleased with himself. His confidence was hot even if it was a pain in the ass.

Tony shuffled the cards with a sour look on his face. “I went too easy on you.”

Loki hummed with a shrug of his shoulders. Tony was determined to win the round, but Loki was incredibly adept at hiding his tells and there was only so much Tony could do about chance. The second question went to Loki.

Loki studied the cards on the table as he thought. Tony was trying to guess what the question was going to be, and they were all about sex. Loki picked up his mug. “You never told me what happened when your father kicked you out of the house.” Tony hadn’t been expecting that. He realized that Loki was giving him an opening to refuse the question. He was seeing if it was okay to ask.

Tony never really had told him anything except that he’d been kicked out. “Yeah,” Tony said. “I guess I never told you about that night, huh?” When Tony looked at Loki, he realized there was worry there. His stomach twinged to think that it was something that had bothered Loki. “I uh, well, my dad was drunk, big surprise there. And I came in late and for some reason that night it really set him off. His rules and his house and all of that.”

Tony grabbed his drink for a sip. “It’s kind of funny, actually, because my mom had told me to stay and save and they’re kind of rich, but I don’t know. They’re weird. Anyway, so that night I don’t know. Normally I just listened to his rants, but that night I couldn’t take it. I yelled back. And he told me to pack my bags and leave, and I could’ve just figured he’d forget it in the morning like he normally did, but that night, I—couldn’t. I said fine and I went up to my room and threw all of the stuff I really wanted to keep in plastic trash bags. I loaded up my car. Then I just—left.”

Tony scratched at his beard, remembering how his mother had called him, telling him to come back. The funny thing was, he’d never missed the chance to inherit his father’s company. He’d only felt relief. “I lived at a hotel for a few weeks and moved here as soon as I got the job.”

“That must’ve been hard,” Loki said, concern pulsing off of him in waves. Tony waved his hand.

“I’m better off now.”

“What about your mother?”

“She just kind of accepts it. I think she’s kind of numb to it, you know? I don’t really know how she puts up with my dad.” Tony forced a smile for Loki, uncomfortable with the attention. “And that was two questions,” Tony said lightly. “Does that mean I get another one?”

“Sure,” Loki said. He curled his fingers around the mug for warmth, frowning.

Tony scratched his beard again, weighing his options. He had lots of questions he wanted to ask. But Loki had gone and made the whole family thing an option, so Tony could ask about something he was curious about too. “Do you really like working for your dad?” Tony crossed his arms. “And that’s not a yes or no question,” he warned.

Loki’s gaze dropped to the table. “I have been raised to take on the company since I was a child,” he said. “It is my ambition, I—may not agree with my father’s methods, but eventually I will inherit the company and then I can change it to be the way I want.”

“Does Thor want to run the company?”

“Thor doesn’t have the dedication to run the entire company,” Loki said instantly. His vehemency flickered out a moment later, maybe out of an effort to hide it from Tony. “Father would be a fool to make him head, but I do think he has considered a co-presidency. He won’t talk to either of us about it.”

Tony didn’t want to ask what would happen if the company went to Thor instead. He picked up the cards, shuffling through them with a loud thrumming sound. Loki set down his mug.

They were both serious as they played this time. Tony won.

He decided he didn’t want to lose the chance to ask, so he just went for it. “What is the number one thing you want to do with me in bed? Like, top fantasy. What is it?”

Loki wouldn’t make eye contact with him. He took an abnormally long time by Loki standards to answer. “I don’t know,” he finally said.

“What do you mean, you don’t know?” Tony asked, voice so much louder than before now that he was excitable.

“I mean I don’t know,” Loki handed it right back to him. Tony wouldn’t stop glaring at him, so Loki had to elaborate. “There are many things I’d like to try, it’s not as if out of ALL of them

there's just ONE I want the most. They're all intriguing."

Tony turned his head to the side, pursing his lips. "I was going to bet it was the blindfold tie thing," he muttered petulantly to himself.

"That's my honest answer," Loki said. Tony looked away but didn't argue.

Loki grabbed the cards, shuffling them aggressively. Tony wasn't exactly surprised when Loki won.

"Name the one thing you read from my stories that you want to do the most," Loki challenged him.

"I—" Tony said, drawing out the word embarrassingly long. "Well, I—"

"Name it," Loki said. The tone of authority shouldn't have appealed to Tony half as much as it did.

Tony glanced back at him. "This is offering to do it, right?"

"No," Loki said without any sign of letting him off the hook. Damn. That made it harder. If he wasn't picking based on what he wanted to do, but on what was the hottest fantasy...

"The one on the couch at work," Tony said, feeling hot under the collar.

"We're definitely not doing that one."

"Obviously," Tony said.

"Why that one?" Loki asked.

Tony balked. "Why?" Loki raised an eyebrow, inviting him to continue. "What do you mean why, it just is." It was Loki's turn to purse his lips unhappily.

"But is it the tone or the setting or the action—" Loki started until Tony interrupted, trying very hard not to roll his eyes straight out of his head.

"Did you just ask me if the *tone* made it hot?"

"That's a legitimate question—"

"—No it's not," Tony said. "Hot things are hot, the end. You don't need a dissertation on them, Mr. English Major."

"I wasn't an English major," Loki said. Tony figured he would've been if he could've been, so it didn't mean much. "And the tone is important—"

"—Loki," Tony said because it sounded like the start of one of Loki's speeches. "Instead of just talking about it all the time, why don't we *try* it?"

That knocked the wind out of Loki's sails.

He stared at Tony as if he'd just processed that was a legitimate option for them. Then, recovering, he rubbed the back of his neck, frowning self-consciously. "I—" It sounded an awful lot like the start of a no.

"What if we just made out?" Tony asked.

It was like a weight had been lifted off of Loki's shoulders. "Yes," he said. "Now?" Loki asked. Tony definitely hadn't been expecting that. He'd kind of meant it in the hypothetical when he spoke but he wasn't going to pass up the offer.

"In your bed?" Tony asked hopefully. "It's more comfortable than the couch," Tony pointed out, and that seemed to ease Loki's thoughts. Tony felt especially ballsy, and the suggestion was giving him a nervous twinge in his chest, but he doubted that it showed.

Loki glanced towards the door. "I don't see why not."

Tony was about to voice his doubts about that sounding like a lukewarm invitation when Loki's attention snapped back to him. There was bright excitement beneath the ever-present layer of stress Loki never seemed to completely lose. "Let's," Loki said, standing up. As Loki turned around, Tony tried to hide the ridiculous smile on his face. He followed Loki without ever really losing it.

Loki's bed had fuzzy throw blankets and an elaborately embroidered quilt and several oblong silk pillows that looked expensive. Tony wanted to jump in and bounce on the mattress. Loki reached to tug the sheets back into place. "It's alright," Tony said. "I don't care if it's messy."

Loki paused, arched over the bed with one arm extended out with the blanket. He let go after a moment's hesitation. Tony sat down on the bed.

As excited as he was for this simple thing, a warning light popped on his head like in one of his programs. Loki needed smaller steps than he did. Tony'd at least figured that out. He held up his hands. "Just making out, I swear."

It took a moment for Loki's cockiness to come back online. "Would you like me to blindfold you with one of my ties?"

Tony swallowed. "Yes," he breathed out. "But not today." He kind of wanted to see Loki for this.

Loki sat down on the bed next to him. Tony's heart began to pound. Now that the moment was here, it was silly, but he was nervous. He knew there wasn't any reason to be, but Loki was gorgeous and wonderful and Tony had kind of been in love with him for a long time. He stared at Loki, struck by the thought. He wondered if he looked as sappy as he felt.

Loki leaned forward, gently slotting their lips together. He set a hand on Tony's shoulder to keep his balance. The warmth crept into Tony's chest as he felt Loki's soft breath against his lips. He kissed Loki back, reaching with an unsteady hand to run his fingers into the silky black hair he'd dreamt of, cradling Loki's head as a faint moan escaped Loki. Loki pulled away a couple of inches. He blinked at Tony with softer green eyes than Tony'd ever seen on him.

Tony smiled at him, affectionate and reassuring. Loki's other hand came to rest on his shoulder as he drew forward again, his lips parting to allow Tony in. Tony's hand dropped to his waist to hold him closer, the silk warm with body heat. Loki's arms locked around his shoulders. Tony's heart was pounding but he could feel Loki's doing the same against his own. His head was spinning. He loved Loki so much that his entire heart ached with it.

Loki's tongue traced against his own, and suddenly one of the arms that had been around his shoulders was clenching and twitching against it instead as Loki became more fervent. Tony made an appreciative groan.

They were both trying to catch their breath when they pulled apart.

Loki pressed one hand to the back of his mouth. "Can I—"

“What?” Tony asked, his hand slipping away from Loki’s waist.

“Will you lay against the bed?”

It was still so strange to see Loki openly unsure of himself.

Tony breathed out a warm laugh. “Yes.”

He allowed himself to fall down against the bed, smiling up at Loki. “All yours, babe.”

Tony swore he saw Loki’s pupils dilate the moment he said it. Still, Loki was gentle with him as he straddled Tony’s hips, as if he was afraid his weight would crush Tony. He held some of his weight back in his legs, not fully relaxed. Loki took a breath, reaching for Tony’s hands.

His fingertips brushed over the pulse in Tony’s wrist before settling in hot hands, lacing their fingers together. Loki had no choice but to lay down against Tony’s chest then. He sought Tony’s lips just as Tony felt how very aroused Loki was. He let out a needy whine that was swallowed by Loki’s lungs. Tony shifted his hips, just for the sensation. Loki’s grip on his hands tightened.

Tony didn’t know how long they spent like that, slowly exploring each other’s mouths as Loki pinned him to the bed. When Loki stilled for a moment, tucking his face against Tony’s neck and breathing in, a shiver raced down Tony’s spine. “Fuck that’s hot,” Tony breathed out.

Loki raised his head, somewhat quizzical as he looked down at Tony. Tony smiled the moment he saw Loki’s messy hair and flushed face.

“Can we switch?” Tony asked.

Loki let go of his hands, slowly rolling off to the side of the bed. Tony glanced at the bulge in Loki’s pants and immediately looked away because if he thought about it any more he was going to lose it. Tony’s heart was still pounding uncomfortably when he settled over Loki, one hand limp on the bed while the other curled against Loki’s jaw. He brushed a thumb over Loki’s cheek. “I wish we had done this ages ago,” Tony thought aloud.

Loki’s arms curled around his shoulders, drawing Tony down. Tony took the first opportunity to kiss Loki’s cheek, his jaw, the warm crook between his jaw and neck. Loki moaned, writhing his hips away to the side as he squeezed Loki’s shoulder. Tony nosed at the warm collar of his shirt, pushing it back so his lips could suck at the tender juncture between his neck and shoulder. “Tony!”

It was a breathy cry, and Tony didn’t think Loki had meant to do it. Normally he would’ve been encouraged, but with Loki he immediately looked up, unsure of what the reaction would be. Loki was just as wide eyed as Tony was.

“Okay?” Tony whispered.

Loki stiffly nodded his head, mortified.

Tony decided the best way to fix that was to kiss his cheek instead, then his ear. “You’re hot when you say my name,” Tony whispered against his ear.

“Flatterer,” Loki muttered.

Tony breathed out a laugh, surprising himself. He leaned up, just enough that he could see Loki again, fondly grinning down at him.

Loki was like art. He was fucking gorgeous. His sleek black hair haloed around him on the plum colored pillow. Not only his cheeks, but his entire face was flushed pink. It was his eyes that got to Tony though, vulnerable and adoring and lustful all at once.

“I’m going to kind of have to call it quits,” Tony admitted. He smiled apologetically. “It’d be rude to ruin the clothes you gave me, right?”

The pensiveness that Tony was used to seeing slipped back into Loki’s expression. “I suppose,” he said. Tony sat up, but then he recognized something in Loki. The moment that Loki thought Tony had looked away, his expression flooded with self-loathing.

Tony stared at him, unsure of what to say.

Loki swung his feet over the side of the bed but didn’t get up.

Tony wished he could read Loki’s mind. He wished it so fucking bad. “What’s wrong?”

Loki turned to him and then looked away. “Sorry,” he said quietly, the self-loathing that Tony recognized from himself pushed to the max.

“For what?” Tony asked. He didn’t like seeing this in Loki. He hated it. It wasn’t right.

“For—” Loki made some vague gesture with his hand. “Disappoin—”

“—You don’t want to have sex right away. So what?” Tony asked. “I’m not disappointed or mad, Loki.”

Loki turned to look at him, searching his face for something. “I’m not,” Tony insisted. “I want you to be comfortable too.” He reached for Loki’s hand, relieved when Loki’s fingers curled back around his.

Loki stared at their hands. He squeezed Tony’s.

“It’s not that I don’t like you.”

Tony stared at Loki with adoration. “I’m fine with us being wired differently. Don’t feel bad about it.” Tony kissed his cheek. It earned him the slightest twitch up in Loki’s lips.

They sat there for a couple of moments in silence until Tony shifted uncomfortably. “You can, uh —use my shower,” Loki said.

If Tony hadn’t felt so damn awkward, he would’ve burst into laughter at just how awkward it was. “Cool,” he said. “I guess I can try out all of your fancy soaps then. Can I use a bath bomb in the shower? Do they work that way?”

Loki let go of his hand, gently shoving his shoulder instead. “There are shower disks under the sink. Just set one on the floor.”

“That’s awesome.” Tony got up and went for the shower, carefully easing the bathroom door shut. When he came out a half-hour later, Loki was in the living room watching TV. Tony snuggled up next to him.

That night they went to sleep in Loki’s bed. After some awkward shifting and rolling over and moving pillows back and forth repeatedly, they both navigated to the middle of the bed. Tony

found himself enveloped as the little spoon. He laid there, Loki's warmth against his back, sending an ease through him that he didn't know he'd desperately needed. Suddenly, bewilderingly, he found himself holding back tears.

Tony curled his hand around Loki's arm that was slung over him. Fuck, he adored Loki, he didn't understand what was going on.

He wondered if Loki had fallen asleep already.

As his thoughts started to spin, Loki spoke. "Tony."

"Hmm?" He didn't trust himself to speak.

"Thank you."

Tony breathed in, steadying himself. He felt calm again, almost. "For what?" he whispered.

"Everything," Loki mumbled.

Tony found Loki's hand, bringing it up to his lips before letting it settle back against his chest. Loki's breath drifted against his neck. It was unbearably comfortable and safe. Tony stared at Loki's bookshelves with that bewildering heat against his eyes.

He didn't think he'd ever been in this deep.

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Just a little something extra for the holidays. :)

“Tony.”

“Tony!” The whisper insisted, a hand softly nudging his shoulder. Tony managed a grunt in response, but even that was asking too much. “You’re dreaming.”

I could’ve told you that, Tony thought, mistakenly thinking that he’d said it aloud. The hand settled on his arm. “Go back to sleep,” the whisper said. *Already am*, Tony thought.

Before the morning, Tony had forgotten about it.

Tony woke up groggy but content, knowing before he’d even opened his eyes that he was too comfortable to move. He heard the soft drumming of a shower in the other room. Tony squinted. This was Loki’s bedroom. But he’d kind of known that, hadn’t he?

Tony rubbed at his face, trying to orient himself. The bathroom door was shut. *I shower in the morning*, Tony remembered.

He sat up.

He wasn’t sure what to do with himself. He looked around the bedroom from his comfy spot in bed, his hair comically mussed to the side in one spiky flip that pointed upwards.

From the bed, Tony could tell that at least some of the papers on Loki’s desk were printouts of news articles on economics. Thick books lined the shelves, most of them non-fiction. The bodice rippers Tony was hoping for weren’t there. A couple photographs were though, one of Loki and Thor at some formal event with proud smiles on their faces, and another of a family portrait.

Tony rubbed his eye. Deciding to get up and use the other bathroom, Tony squinted in the bright natural light as he walked into the living room. When he spotted himself in the mirror, he got the hair situation under control. He felt better rested than he’d been in a long time.

Loki still wasn’t out of the shower when Tony went back into the bedroom. He sat at the edge of the bed, reading the titles on the spines of the books. After a while he heard the water shut off. It was even longer before Loki came out though, long enough for Tony to think on how nice this felt and how much he hoped it’d happen again.

When the bathroom door opened, Loki was fully dressed, his hair dried and straightened with a slight curl at the ends. He was wearing a regular cotton shirt and jeans this time though. Tony needed a moment to appreciate the look. “You’re bright-eyed and bushy tailed,” Tony said.

“I can say the same to you,” Loki said warmly. “Would you like breakfast? I haven’t made coffee yet.”

“That’s a crime,” Tony said.

Loki grinned but said nothing, starting for the door. Tony hadn’t paid much attention to the windows when he walked through the living room the first time, but he did when Loki stopped and moved to look out them. “I’m glad this happened on a Sunday,” he remarked.

Everything was blanketed in a thick coat of snow, several inches deep. Tony hadn’t taken it that seriously last night, but now he was especially glad he’d stayed. “Look,” Loki said, tapping at the glass.

Below them, a plow was making a futile attempt to navigate between the parked cars on one of the side streets. Every time it moved, thick walls of snow fell over the driver side doors of the parked vehicles. Tony pitied whoever had to dig theirs out. “It would be a good day for sledding,” Loki said.

“Yeah. Too bad there aren’t any hills around here,” Tony answered.

Loki seemed genuinely disappointed at the thought, but he stepped back from the glass. “I don’t have much for breakfast except toast and oatmeal.”

“Toast is fine,” Tony said. They shuffled their way into the kitchen, where Tony took a seat at the table while Loki started the coffee and threw slices of bread into a toaster oven. The silence wasn’t uncomfortable.

“What were you dreaming about last night?” Loki asked, taking a jar of raspberry jam from the fridge. He glanced over and catching Tony’s confused expression said, “I woke you up. You were kicking and muttering about something.”

Dimly, sort of waking up registered, but Tony couldn’t really remember. “It might’ve been the one about the cave,” Tony guessed. “Every once in a while I have this dream that I’m stuck in a cave and an old man helps me leave in a suit of armor.” He shrugged. “But I fell right back asleep.”

Loki nodded, setting their toast on a plate. “Did I keep you up?” Tony asked.

“No,” Loki said, walking over to the table. Tony happily took the mug that he was offered, then a thick slice of toast. Loki watched him with a faintly fond expression, sipping his own coffee. “If we want lunch, we may have to walk down to the corner store.”

Tony brightened at the thought of being invited to stay for lunch, even though it made sense that he would be. “Do you think they’re open?” Tony asked, wiping a couple of crumbs from his beard.

“I saw the owner going in and their lights are on,” Loki answered. He was lucky to have such a high up apartment to see the city. “Let’s find out what the weather’s supposed to be like today.” He got up and returned with his laptop. Tony’s heart fluttered when he saw its silver sheen, instantly transported back to the day he’d fixed it. “Scattered flurries until the evening,” Loki said. He fell silent as he checked something else. Tony drank his coffee.

“What’re you looking at?” Tony asked.

Loki frowned. “Checking my e-mail for work.” He quickly typed something and then stood up, going for another cup of coffee. The moment his back was to Tony, Tony stared at the laptop with longing. There had to be new stories on there.

Suddenly a hand clicked the laptop shut. Tony glanced up to find Loki glaring at him and fighting down a grin. Tony smiled guiltily. “Don’t even think about it,” Loki said.

“But—”

Loki picked up the laptop, carrying it with him to the counter before setting it down to finish making his cup of coffee. Tony sighed dramatically. “When will you let me read another one?”

“Who says there’s another one?” Loki asked, voice lofty and indifferent. Tony smiled knowingly at him, and Loki had to look away not to smile in return.

“When?” Tony asked again.

“When,” Loki repeated. “Why do you assume it’s a *when*?”

“Because I’m charming and you want to impress me?”

Loki smiled at his coffee cup, pretending to be absorbed in stirring in the creamer. “You’re going to have to be a whole lot more charming than that,” he said.

Tony felt like he’d gotten a win. “So when I come up with something especially charming, you’re going to let me read it?”

“You’re assuming there’s something to read.”

“No, I’m not.” Tony smiled at him. Loki glanced at him and then glanced away, sipping from his mug.

“Would you like to watch an episode since you’re finished with breakfast?” Loki asked.

“Distracting,” Tony declared. “This man is trying to distract me.”

“I want to see the one with the tribble,” Loki said innocently.

Tony pouted for a second, but then he got up. “Fine,” he said. “But only because I’ve been wanting to watch that one with you.”

When they sat down on the couch, Loki’s arm came around his shoulders again. Tony felt at home.

Loki enjoyed the cold a hell of a lot more than Tony did. He walked with light footed, swift movements as Tony trudged several feet behind him with rosy cheeks and a scowl hidden behind one of Loki’s borrowed fleece scarves. “This is gorgeous,” Loki said, admiring the snowy city scape.

You’re gorgeous, Tony’s mind helpfully supplied before Tony could help it. Snowflakes sprinkled Loki’s black hair beneath his knitted hat. “This convenience store had better have good sandwiches,” Tony warned.

“They’re homemade,” Loki soothed him. “Trust me, they’ll be much better than the oatmeal and stale chips I have back in my apartment.”

Tony was about to grumble about the cold wind and the snow melting into his shoes when he spotted Loki reaching out to scrape a line of snow from the top of a fence. He started packing it into a ball before Tony’s warning could get out. “Are you seriously—?”

The snowball launched towards him in an arc that hit his shoulder purely because he didn’t move. “Loki—” Tony started, then decided it was best to fight fire with fire. Or snow with snow,

whatever.

The second one hit his shoulder before he'd gotten his own snowball together. Bits of ice melted down his neck. "Take this!" Tony yelled, hurling it square at Loki's chest.

Loki laughed when it hit him, already in the process of making another. Tony got hit with three more before he gave up trying to return fire and decided to run at Loki instead, reaching for the arm that had the snowball in it. "Give it to me!"

"You want it?"

"Yes!" Tony said, only realizing it'd been a trap when he felt snow in his hair. Loki's laughter drowned out his complaining.

"Tony," Loki said fondly, using his freed arm to wrap around Tony's shoulders as he smiled down at him. "Tony," he cooed. "You should know better than to think you could win against me in a snowball fight."

Loki was holding Tony against him, and though the heat wasn't there the closeness of it flustered and thrilled Tony. Loki was smiling at him like he was precious and important and a bunch of other things that Tony wanted to soak in.

But then he remembered the windows around them. Someone could look down and see this, couldn't they?

"Noted," Tony grumbled, stepping out of Loki's hold to take a few bratty steps forward and putting on more of a show than he had to.

Loki's voice was still bright and cheerful behind him. "Tony," he called like an amused siren. "Tony, you know something that would be charming?"

"Huh?" Tony asked, turning around. The look on Loki's face said he was obviously up to no good.

"Touch your tongue to that pole," he dared Tony.

Tony glared at him. "I know that trick," he said. Loki shrugged, walking so that he caught up to Tony. "You know, the bad thing about that is that when you say it, I actually want to do it," Tony said. He huffed. "I can see how you got Thor into trouble."

"Me?" Loki asked. He chuckled, brushing against Tony as they navigated the snowy sidewalk.

Tony shook his head, but he knew that he was the one that'd been charmed.

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

It's another little chapter. They won't all be this small!

Tony scrolled back and forth through the job board, scanning for location more than anything else. He hoped that he could find something within walking distance. He knew that wasn't exactly realistic, but maybe he'd get lucky.

He'd nursed his crush on Loki for a long time, but it still amazed him that a weekend of essentially just hanging out together could feel so damn good.

Loki had dropped him off at his apartment that night with a kiss goodbye and an affection in his gaze that'd made Tony glance abashedly away. Tony pressed his fingers to the spot on his cheek where Loki's lips had been without realizing it. He clicked another job posting.

As much as he didn't want to leave here and lose seeing Loki everyday, Tony knew he'd already made up his mind. He'd made it up that weekend. It was better to just rip the bandaid off and do it. Then they could date as openly as they wanted. Then Tony could walk down the street beside Loki without feeling paranoid.

The door swung open. Loki glanced in, checking for Tony. He straightened up when he spotted Tony, striding over to the desk. "Do you know where I have to go this week? From Wednesday to Saturday because no one can figure anything out in a competent manner?" Ah, so it was a rant day.

"Where?"

"Cincinnati."

Tony grimaced for him.

"It's nothing that couldn't be taken care of over a video conference, but these sanctimonious pricks insist that it's necessary. They want us to—" Tony lost track of the complaint as he admired the way a few strands had fallen from Loki's slick bun, swaying with him as he gestured angrily. It shouldn't be right for a person to be hot when they were angry. And yet Loki was. Tony's gaze slid down to Loki's blue patterned tie. He imagined how it'd feel to tug it loose and peel back the stiff collar of Loki's shirt to suck at his neck as Loki clasped his shoulders and made those beautiful sounds from before. "And Thor's going to want to go out, he can never just sit in the hotel room—"

"—Thor's going too?" Tony asked.

Loki nodded, exasperated. "We both are." Tony frowned, but it wasn't because he sympathized with Loki's unplanned brotherly bonding time. It was because that meant no going out on a date after work on Friday and no smoke breaks. "At least we'll have first class tickets on the flight," he decided. "I won't be squashed against the window trying to find space to breathe."

Rant complete, Loki dropped down into the chair beside Tony's desk. "What've you been working on?" He asked. It was a casual, friendly question that didn't have an expected answer, and yet Tony was thrown off guard.

Tony blinked, feeling guilty. He wasn't sure that he wanted to tell Loki that he was looking at other jobs yet because he didn't know how Loki would feel about it. Loki leaned in, concern taking place of the causal indignation that had been there seconds before. "What?" He asked.

Shit. Tony hadn't hidden his surprise at all. And now he looked guilty too. Shit. He had to say something.

Tony stared at Loki for a moment. Shit. He was making it worse. "You uh, know how we bumped into Thor this weekend?"

"Yes?"

Tony grimaced at his keyboard. "Well, uh, we, well I—I was thinking about it, and I don't think we can keep this up forever. I mean, eventually somebody's going to notice, and I thought maybe I should start looking for another job before that happens."

Loki stared at Tony in shock. He looked like Tony had struck him. "And," Tony said, shifting nervously in his computer chair, "you know how you said I could be doing more and all, I just thought if I found something else, then, then we wouldn't have to worry about being seen together somewhere."

Loki's eyebrows bowed together in worry. He stared at Tony, pressing his lips together in thought as he held Tony's anxious gaze. He seemed to be searching for something, but what it was Tony didn't know.

"Right," Loki said. "That's great," he tried. "I had hoped for you to have a new role when I took over." He paused for a moment. "But your talent is being wasted here," he said, gaze dropping down to the desk. "You can do better." Loki brushed his thumb over his pinky nail. "Please—put me down as a reference. I will make sure you get in wherever you would like to work."

The chair rattled as Loki stood up. "Excuse me," he said, digging into his suit pocket. "I need to smoke." He started for the door, avoiding eye contact.

"Loki!" Tony called from his desk. "It's freezing out there." The idiot didn't have his coat with him and he was headed for the exit door. "You wanna take my coat?" Tony asked, getting up. "Take my coat," he said, not waiting for an answer. Tony grabbed it off another chair, handing it to Loki as he stood awkwardly beside the door waiting for Tony.

Loki still stared at the floor as he accepted the jacket, but his green eyes skittered to Tony's for a moment as he let out a clipped, "Thanks." Tony just nodded, stepping back as Loki pulled it on and slipped outside.

Tony stared at the door for a moment before going back to his desk. He could smell the stale smoke of the fake cigarette drifting in from outside. Tony stared at the job listings, feeling immensely guilty and unhappy, but not upset with Loki. This was for the best. They both knew that.

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony was sitting on his couch, working his way through a bag of potato chips while he watched a show on restoring old cars. They were just about to do the big reveal when Tony's cellphone went off. It was Loki's ringtone. Tony fished his phone out of the couch cushions. He hoped that Loki was having fun in Cincinnati. Yesterday, Loki had said he hadn't seen much but the inside of an office building and Tony'd pestered him about getting a souvenir.

Picking up, Tony pressed the phone to his ear. "Hey Loki," he said brightly, eager to hear Loki's snark again.

"Tony?" There was a wet little breath in his name. Tony sat up, knocking the bag of chips onto the floor.

"What's—" Tony started, only to be cut off.

"—Tony," Loki said, louder and more heartbroken.

"What's wrong?" Tony pleaded, standing up in restless frustration. A dozen ideas were running through his head, none of them good. "Loki?"

"Tony, I—" Loki breathed in, a snotty, thick sound. "Tony, I—" There was a brush of static as Loki breathed on the receiver. "Told Thor," he said. Tony pressed a hand to his forehead, but before he could even get out the words to ask, Loki was blurting it all out. "We were just talking about things and it was going well, and I—I don't know, I wanted to tell someone so badly, Tony I'm an idiot—"

"Where are you?" Tony interrupted. Something just wasn't right. This wasn't like Loki.

"In m-my hotel."

"Is Thor there?"

"He's in his own room," Loki said. "I won't share with him anymore because he **snore**s. Did you get a new job?" Loki asked.

"Loki, it's only been a few days—"

"—But you're wonderful," Loki cut him off. "Someone's HR is going to scoop you up," he said, mumbling at the end.

Tony stuck one thumb through his jean loop. Now he kind of had an idea of what was going on. "Loki, where were you before now?"

"In the hotel bar," Loki said. Tony nodded. Nailed it. "Thor wanted, he wanted a drink and I said there's no reason to go halfway across town if he's just going to get drunk on beer and the bartender talked me into a Moscow mule and I was having a good time with Thor, and we were talking, and Tony I *told* him, I told him like an idiot, I *hate* myself—"

"—Woah, hey, hey," Tony said. "It's okay," Tony lied. He was freaking out, plus he had zero

experience with drunk Loki. “What did Thor say?”

The line was quiet for a moment. “He said he wouldn’t tell but you know him, just because he doesn’t want to tell doesn’t mean he won’t open his big mouth—”

“—Okay,” Tony said, just because it sounded like the start of a massive tangent. “How uh, how’d he react?”

Loki spoke in a childlike mumble. “Good. He hit me.”

“What?!” Tony exclaimed.

“My back. Like good job,” Loki said. Tony rubbed his fingers against his forehead. “Good job,” Loki said louder.

Okay, so this was incredibly nerve-racking and Tony didn’t like dealing with drunks in general, but he’d never seen Loki uninhibited. He kind of wanted to laugh and smile because wow, but that also felt inappropriate. “How much did you drink?” Tony asked, curious.

“Two,” Loki said, slightly bratty about it. “And a few shots because the bartender made us wait and it was busy to make up for it, I don’t know, Thor wanted to pay for it. I don’t have a good tolerance anymore.”

“Obviously,” Tony said.

Loki made something like a whine and a snarl. Then he said condescendingly, “I’m a sloppy drunk, Tony.” Like Tony should’ve known. Loki almost sounded proud of it. Tony couldn’t help it. He broke into a smile at the absurdity of drunk Loki.

“I’d rather you be sloppy than immune,” Tony said, half to himself. Loki was quiet for a moment.

“I’m sorry, Tony.”

Tony sat down on the arm of his couch, cradling the phone to his ear. “You know, I don’t think I heard you say sorry so much until we started dating.” Loki was quiet. “Maybe once when you rolled over my foot with the computer chair, but you didn’t even apologize when you stole my ramen cups.”

“I miss you.”

Tony blinked. It was so sincere and sweet. Could he say that? That it was sweet? Fuck if it was cool or not. Tony loved it. “I miss you too.”

“I wish you were here,” Loki said. “I hate these idiots with their stupid ideas and I hate pretending that I give a shit about their company.”

“You’ll be home in a couple of days,” Tony reassured him.

“I think about you a lot,” Loki said. “All day.” Tony felt his cheeks burning. Loki was going to be so embarrassed when he remembered this conversation sober. Then he’d be pissed about it out of embarrassment, Tony was sure of it. “I wish I had you to sleep in bed with me here.”

“Me too,” Tony said, longing sliding into his voice.

“I don’t want you to leave.” Tony’s heart skipped a beat. He wasn’t sure if Loki was talking about what he thought Loki was talking about. “I like seeing you at work everyday, Tony.” Yep, he was.

The pure honesty of it ached.

Tony stared down at the ratty carpet. “I know, Rock of Ages,” he said quietly. “I don’t want to go either, but it’s something we kind of have to do.”

“Anyone’s going to be lucky to have you,” Loki said, sorrow flooding his voice. Tony needed to steer them away from this. He didn’t want to hear Loki cry about it. If Loki cried about it, then he was going to cry about it.

“Hey,” Tony said. “You uh, did you write anything new while you’re up there?”

“No Tony,” Loki said, a warning and a pout in his voice.

“Oh, well.” He stared at the white painted bricks of his apartment wall. The fireplace had been painted white too and ignored after it’d been sealed off to make the apartment. “Listen. You go and drink a bunch of water, alright? I don’t want you to be hungover tomorrow.” Actually, shit. He wanted to stay on the line with Loki. He missed him damn it, and he’d had no idea how good it’d felt to hear Loki’s voice until he had the idea of it being taken away. “Hey, Loki? Maybe uh, maybe when you get back you can come stay the night at my place?” He heard something fall on Loki’s end. “What was that?”

“I knocked my carryon bag off the dresser,” Loki announced. There was a zipper and some shuffling sounds.

“Oh. Are you going to bed? I should let you go,” Tony said awkwardly.

Loki was quiet for another moment. “You said get water.”

“It’s not in your carryon!”

“I have a water bottle in there,” Loki said. Tony took a deep breath. Fine, whatever. There was the soft rustle of bed sheets on Loki’s end. “Have you been okay at work?” Loki asked.

“Yep,” Tony said. “I’ve been holding down the fort.” It’d been painfully boring without Loki, but it’d been fine.

“Tony,” Loki said.

“Yeah?”

Loki yawned.

“What is it?” Tony prompted him.

Loki yawned again as he spoke. “I miss you.” Tony smiled down at the ground.

“I know,” Tony said. “You told me.”

“Because it’s true,” Loki mumbled. Tony could easily imagine him in his hotel bed, his phone on the pillow beside him as he started to fall asleep.

Tony needed to let him go to bed. “Good night, Loki,” Tony said. “Call me tomorrow, okay? And let me know when you’re getting on your flight.”

“Okay,” Loki muttered. He was definitely falling asleep.

“I’m going to hang up,” Tony told him. “Put your phone on the nightstand.”

“I know,” Loki grumbled. “Goodnight Tony.”

“Good—”

“—I love you,” Loki spoke over him.

Tony didn’t know if it was the alcohol talking for Loki or not, but the words came freely to his mouth in reply. “I love you too.”

Tony imagined that Loki was smiling to himself in bed on the other end. “I miss you,” Loki said.

“I know,” Tony said. It was less cute the third time. “Go to bed.”

“Fine,” Loki mumbled.

“I’m hanging up now,” Tony said. He listened for a moment, but he didn’t hear anything. “Drink some water before you go to bed.”

“I am!”

Tony held in a laugh. “Good night,” he said, then hung up before he got caught up again.

Tony held the phone in his lap, staring at the wall with a sappy smile on his face. He knew he was making the right choice with Loki. He was looking forward to finding a new job so he could let the whole world know that he loved this man.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter's going to be a long one. ;)

Chapter 22

Loki called as Tony was sitting at his kitchen table, working on a circuit board for fun. “Hello?” Tony set a tool down, reaching for his coffee.

“I’m about to board the plane.”

Tony rushed to finish his sip. He wondered how much of their conversation Loki remembered. “Do you remem—”

“—Yes,” Loki cut him off. So much for that. Loki’s voice dropped down lower, irritated. “Thor won’t stop looking at me with proud puppy eyes. I feel like I’m starring in a Hallmark special,” Loki hissed.

It was kind of a bummer that Loki wasn’t basking in brotherly approval, but then again, Tony’d known that Loki wouldn’t be pleased sober. “At least he’s cool with it,” Tony pointed out.

Loki let out a humorless chuckle. “He’d be an idiot to disapprove when I know all of his affairs.”

For some reason, Tony felt like he should scold Loki for saying that, but he knew Loki was just in a bad mood. “Are you coming back to my place when you get in?” Tony asked.

Surprise colored Loki’s voice. “Did I say I...” Loki’s voice trailed off as he tried to remember. Tony filled him in.

“I asked you to sleep over when you got back, but you got distracted by your carryon before you could answer.”

“Oh,” Loki said. He seemed to remember that, and suddenly his voice was much happier. “Yes, I’ll come.”

“Great,” Tony said, excitement coursing through him. He’d hoped for this, but he hadn’t been certain. “I’ll order in pizza.” He could hear the airport announcements echoing behind Loki.

“I’m going to get on the plane,” Loki said.

Tony had been wondering if Loki remembered the last bit of their conversation from before too. He decided he’d test it. His heart picked up a few beats. “Alright. I’ll see you when you get here. I love you.”

“I love you too, Tony.”

Tony’s head spun. He couldn’t believe that Loki said it back, and so quickly. In the back of his mind he knew that he had Loki had said as much before in his writing, but not so directly. And yet here Loki was, entirely sober, saying it in a calm, sincere voice. “I’ll see you soon,” Loki promised.

“Wait,” Tony said. “Do you—” He clenched his teeth, trying to word it right. He didn’t want to sit with the thought for hours, waiting, and then lose the nerve to ask. “We’ve only been on a few dates, do you think, is it alright for us to say it already?” He’d kind of wondered about that last night, if he’d somehow come on too strong.

There was an electronic sound on Loki’s end and people chatting. “I don’t see why not,” Loki said,

utterly nonchalant about it. “We’ve known each other much longer than on our dates.” If Loki was calm about it, Tony was. “Does it bother you?”

“No!” Tony stood up, needing to pace. “No, I’m good, I just wanted to know what you thought, I’ve never seen you drunk—”

“—It won’t happen again,” Loki assured him. Tony smiled, rolling his eyes too. In a way it was good to hear Loki back to his no nonsense business voice. “Next time I will leave Thor to go by himself.” Tony tried to imagine what Thor’s morning must have been like. He pictured a hissing black cat swatting at a golden retriever as it wagged its tail. “Tony, I have to go. I’ll let you know when we land.”

“I have your flight number,” Tony reminded him.

“Right,” Loki said. “We should arrive on time. It will take us a while to get back from the airport. I’ll have to drop by my apartment, but then I’ll text you as I’m on my way over. I have to stop at work to drop a few things off as well.” Tony felt like Loki was saying all of it to have a sense of control, maybe to make up for the lack of it last night. He didn’t care. Loki was coming over. He was content.

“Okay.”

“They’re making us turn off our phones. Bye, Tony.”

“Bye.” As the line went dead, he set down his phone. He reached to start back up on the circuit board when he realized that his apartment was kind of a mess.

Thank goodness it’d be a few hours before Loki arrived, then. He might actually be able to get it cleaned.

The pizza arrived before Loki did. Tony tried to cover up his disappointment when he opened the door to discover that it was just the delivery guy. He also tried not to eat his share, but then Loki was running thirty minutes late and Tony was hungry.

When the doorbell rang the second time, Tony rushed to it with bright eyes. Loki stood out in the snow with his head bowed to keep his face tucked in his scarf. His eyes crinkled as he saw Tony. “Come in,” Tony insisted. He barely locked the apartment door before he spun around, arms drifting outward slightly in hope of a hug. Loki must’ve interpreted it as such because he met Tony halfway, pulling Tony in tight the moment he got his arms around him.

Tony’s cheek brushed against the rough wool of Loki’s coat. “I missed you,” Loki muttered against Tony’s hair.

Tony was beaming upwards at him. He was so excited to see him, and he’d hardly been gone. “I missed you too. Work was so boring.” Loki half-smiled, allowing his hold to loosen. Loki dug into his pocket as Tony stepped back.

“They didn’t have much at the gift shop,” Loki said. He held out a keychain.

It was bright gold with the city name emblazoned on it. “It’s perfect,” Tony said. “Are you hungry? The pizza’s here.”

“I can smell it,” Loki said, unwinding his scarf. Tony took it without a word, holding his hand out

expectantly for Loki's coat. He hung it up in the closet where his own coat was hanging up for the first time in ages. Loki had brought a small overnight bag, which Tony eyed with a swell of affection and excitement. Maybe Loki would leave some of his stuff behind too. That'd be nice, if Loki had a toothbrush or something that always stayed. "I had lunch on the plane, but it wasn't very good."

"I don't think planes have a reputation for good food," Tony said with some amusement, leading Loki towards the kitchen.

"I've had a few flights where it was," Loki said. He accepted the plate that Tony held out for him.

Tony took a third slice, hungry again. "Thor flew with you, right?"

"Yes," Loki said, grabbing a napkin from the pile on Tony's table. "He goes through a pack of bubblegum every time." Tony pulled open the refrigerator door, glancing back at Loki. "To help with getting his ears to pop," Loki explained. "I can't say I enjoy flying either."

"Do you want soda or one of these tea things?" Tony asked. He'd run out and bought them specifically for Loki because he'd seen them in Loki's fridge. It wasn't any surprise when Loki chose one of the tea things. Tony had planned to eat watching TV together on the couch, but Loki was sitting down at the table, so Tony followed suit. "What was it like when you told Thor?" Tony asked.

The plastic cap of the bottle cracked as Loki broke the seal. "He was happy for me," Loki said, well on his way to glossing over it.

"Was he surprised though?" Tony asked. He wasn't worried anymore. Tony also knew that everything he got from Loki about Thor came with a heavy bias. Still, he wanted to hear the story from Loki again, thinking that there were details that'd been skipped over when Loki called.

"I guess," Loki said, more interested in picking up his slice of pizza. Tony let out a little frustrated sigh.

"You know," Tony said. "I like drunk Loki."

That got Loki's attention. He seemed weary and curious as he studied Tony. "I do," Tony said. Loki glanced away, an embarrassed flush dusting his cheeks that would've been entirely too easy to miss if he hadn't been so anemically pale. "So a Hallmark special, huh?"

"I made him promise not to tell," Loki said. He clenched his fingers against the tabletop for a moment. "I—I believe he will try to keep quiet, but he is terrible at keeping secrets. And he—" Loki scowled. "Was blathering on this morning about how this is a good change for me. I swear, he has the most condescending, smarmy attitude."

Tony shrugged. "As long as he keeps it quiet. I'm glad he's happy though, you know? It would suck if he knew and didn't like it."

"It's none of his damn business to like or not like it," Loki declared. But Tony kind of doubted him. As thorny as Loki was about it, Tony secretly thought he liked having his brother's approval. Tony really didn't think that even drunk Loki would've told Thor if deep down he hadn't wanted him to know or care.

Tony reached for his drink. Loki sighed to himself. They ate in silence for a minute before Tony said, "I put some movies in my queue, but we could keep working through Star Trek if you want."

"I'd prefer Star Trek," Loki said. Inwardly, Tony was thrilled. Not because he liked it, but because Loki liked something that Tony had introduced him to. "I wanted to make a reference to an episode the other day to make a point in a conversation, but I knew no one would get it."

"I would've," Tony said playfully. Loki grinned back at him, but then it shifted into something softer and more affectionate. Loki asked him how his week had been and then told him some of the minutia from his trip as they finished up eating. When they settled in together on the couch, Tony only had to wait a split second before Loki's arm wrapped around his shoulders. Tony leaned in against him.

His soap smelled like pine, but something warm and spicy was mixed in with it. Tony couldn't pay attention to the screen. He closed his eyes, breathing in. The warmth of Loki's chest against him, the slow rhythm of his breathing, it was unbearably comforting. Loki shifted and Tony's eyes shot open, staring at the screen like he'd done something wrong, but then he realized that Loki had only moved so that they were closer. Tony turned to get a look at Loki's face.

Loki glanced down at him. That faint flush was on his cheeks again, although Tony wasn't sure why.

"Maybe we could do something other than watch TV?" Loki suggested softly.

Tony hit pause on the remote, tossing it onto his coffee table. "I like that idea," Tony said, adrenaline coursing through him as he boldly moved to straddle Loki's lap, setting his hands on Loki's shoulders.

He gave Loki his best seductive smile, hoping his nerves didn't slip out past him and show.

Loki's arm slowly dropped from the couch, fingertips setting on Tony's hip as if he couldn't believe that he could, but there was confidence in his gaze as he smiled back at Tony, both hands coming to hold his hips.

Tony leaned in, taking Loki's warm lips with a wet kiss that had Loki blinking back at him, revealing more astonishment and affection in that simple look than he probably realized. It thrilled Tony to see how openly Loki wanted him. He leaned back in, sliding one hand up and cupping the back of Loki's neck.

Loki responded by holding Tony's hips against him as his own rolled upwards, his tongue sliding across Tony's in a way that made Tony buck back. He wrapped his arms around Loki's shoulders, throwing all of himself into it.

Loki groaned, fingertips digging into the ridges of bone in Tony's back. His hips stayed still but Tony's couldn't. He swallowed Loki's moans, running his fingers through Loki's long hair.

When Tony got a chance to finally breathe, he used it to grab Loki's shirt collar, tugging it open so he could bury himself in the crook of Loki's neck. Loki's arousal strained against his as Loki gasped for a breath beside Tony's ear.

The scent of him was intoxicating. Tony moaned, sucking at tender skin as Loki grasped his hips.

Tony reached for the next button of Loki's shirt, slipping it lose before he felt Loki still, then his hand shoot up and catch Tony's wrist. Tony froze, wide eyed, only to look up and find Loki staring back at him with yearning.

He cupped the side of Tony's cheek, drawing him into a kiss that was wonderfully tender and horribly confusing.

Tony drew back, as flustered as Loki, with questioning eyes. “Stop?” He asked in a whisper.

Loki let go of his wrist. “No,” he muttered back, kissing Tony’s cheek. “Don’t stop.” He slotted their lips together, nipping at Tony’s bottom lip.

Tony’s hands settled back on Loki’s shoulders, his thumbs kneading absently against Loki’s chest as Loki’s hands wandered up and down his back.

Tony rocked his hips, frustrated and needy. He pushed at Loki’s shoulders, drawing away from the panting breath drifting against his own. Loki seemed startled. Tony glanced at him and then made the mistake of looking downward, flushing when he saw Loki’s shirt peeled open from only the top button to reveal a slender collarbone, so utterly, ridiculously debauched when compared to the way Tony was used to seeing him.

“Hey,” Tony breathed out. He was rising and falling in Loki’s lap in time with Loki’s hurried breathing. The pressure in his jeans was unbearable. He was overheating. “Remember—” He licked his lips. He’d been thinking about this. A lot. “How I—told you—I like blowjobs?”

Loki’s eyelids slipped down into a flat, unimpressed expression. He obviously thought Tony was about to solicit one. “Well,” Tony breathed out, “I also like to give them.” Loki clearly hadn’t been expecting that. He didn’t seem to know what to say. Tony just stared at him with hazy eyes, his hair mussed to the side where Loki had raked his fingers through it.

Loki blinked, then swallowed.

“Let me?” Tony asked. “I want to.” Fuck, did he want to. Loki had no idea. “Please.”

Loki shifted slightly, then immediately stopped when he realized he was aggravating their arousal. “You want to,” he breathed out.

Tony kissed Loki’s cheek. “Yes.” He tucked his face into the spot he’d worked on Loki’s neck, waiting for an answer.

Loki combed his fingers through Tony’s hair. Tony could feel Loki’s heart pounding back against his chest. “Okay,” Loki breathed out.

Tony glanced at him. Loki didn’t seem entirely sure what to make of him. Tony kissed him, returning the tenderness from before. He cradled Loki’s head in his hands, marveling at him. “Okay?” He whispered. Loki nodded back. “Tell me to stop if—” Loki nodded, gaze intense before he leaned in to catch Tony’s lips, conveying trust.

Tony had to let himself just breathe for a couple seconds before he let go of Loki, sliding gracefully to the floor. Loki stared down at him, blushing furiously, his long fingers self-consciously re-buttoning his shirt. Tony leaned up into his lap, setting his hands on Loki’s very clothed thighs. His erection was obvious through the strained fabric. Tony rubbed Loki’s legs, trying to coax some of the tension from them.

A slow, certain smile spread across Tony’s lips. “You are gorgeous,” he said, reaching for Loki’s belt. “I don’t think I’ve told you that enough.”

Loki glanced away, biting his lip. Tony drew the belt free with a low, winding hiss, setting it on the couch beside Loki.

Tony usually felt pretty damn confident when it came to doing this, but with Loki he was less sure. He cared about getting it right. His fingers shook as he undid the button in Loki’s dress slacks. He

hoped that the tremor was faint enough that his nerves would go unnoticed.

He was wrong, though. Loki's hand slid under his jaw, urging him to look up as Loki offered Tony an out in the way he said his name. Tony shook his head, leaning back into Loki's hold just so that he could kiss the finger closest. "I want to," Tony insisted. "If you do." He glanced back at Loki who nodded slightly, also not entirely self-assured.

He wished this were all easy, but then again if it were that easy, it'd just feel routine. This wasn't routine because he cared. They both did. Tony tugged Loki's pants open the rest of the way, Loki's groan ringing in his ears. Tony eased the long cock out, marveling as his hand slid over warm, smooth skin. Tony pressed his lips to the head without thinking. For ages he'd dreamed about this, and suddenly he was here.

The salty twang stuck with him as he pulled back, leaning in to trace his tongue over a prominent vein. The heat of Loki's thighs around him made him oblivious to the pain in his knees as he knelt on the hard floor.

Tony reached a tentative hand forward. Loki was heavy in his hand, and Tony could hardly believe he was free to tug down the hard length of him, drawing a vocal moan that had Loki arching forward. Tony glanced up. He'd been so lost in his thoughts that he hadn't thought to look at Loki's face.

He was flushed, eyelids slightly drooping as he watched Tony, gripping the couch cushion for dear life. Tony kissed the head of his cock again, holding that eye contact, before he reached for Loki's hands, guiding them to his head.

Loki's fingernails combed through Tony's hair with something like reverence.

Tony surged forward, allowing his eyes to fall shut as he took as much as he could bear, throat convulsing around the thick girth. He hummed, the fingers in his hair clenching tight as Loki let out a strangled moan. Tony drew himself back and forth, letting go until all he felt was the reliable rhythm he set, sucking and laving and exploring to his heart's content.

Loki moaned with stuttered breaths every time Tony changed his motions. Like it was more than Loki could process. His fingers tugged at Tony's hair, seemingly beyond Loki's control because every time after Loki would make a conscious effort to stop pulling, and Tony would only reward it by finding something else to get the same reaction.

He stopped thinking. He got lost in physical sensation. Loki's voice, a song of praise without any coherent words, his own heart beating in thrilled anticipation, the warmth of being held close and the scent that flooded him, overwhelmed.

"Tony," Loki uttered. Tony came out of his haze to look up at him, lips stretched thin around the girth of him. Loki just stared down at him and Tony seized the opportunity to pull back and explore under the head before inching forward again. "I'm going to—"

Tony closed his eyes, yearning to taste him. He wanted to feel all of it, take all of it, and know that Loki's cry of pleasure was because of him. Tony pulled back, sucking adamantly at the head, and that was all it took for Loki to spill into his mouth.

Tony swallowed, dimly aware of anything but a slow burning sense of pride.

And then, suddenly, the moment was over and he felt so incredibly alone. He looked up to assure himself that he wasn't and found Loki dazed, panting slightly with his head dropped back against

the couch. Tony crawled into his lap, the loneliness forgotten as Loki's limp hands came back to life and his arms curled around Tony like they'd never let go.

Tony kissed him, desperate to give what was overpowering him a place to go.

Loki returned it, fervently, making Tony dizzy with how wanted he was. It was only when he felt a hand at his jeans that he came out of it. Tony pressed his forehead against Loki's with a gasp.

"Let me?" Loki asked, Tony managing to breathe out an okay before his jeans were tugged open. Loki's hand trailed down the length of him as Tony was freed from the confining heat. He grasped at Loki, gasping. Tony couldn't remember something so simple as this ever drawing such a reaction out of him before. He leaned into it with urgency.

Loki's hand was firm, stroking in a pattern that Tony was unaccustomed to. Tony let him try a little, melting at the sensation of Loki finally touching him where he wanted it most, before grabbing his hand and guiding him to stroke the way he preferred. Loki made the adjustment quickly, kissing the side of his neck as Tony stared unseeing at the far wall.

He came faster than he would've liked, a contented moan escaping from deep within his lungs. Loki pulled him through the last of it, nosing against Tony's neck before burying his face and cradling Tony's hips against him again. Tony closed his eyes, one hand still fisted into Loki's shirt.

Loki's lips found Tony's neck, soft and chaste. Tony curled his arms around Loki's shoulders, unwilling to leave the embrace. Loki's kisses were solid and real and strangely comforting.

Loki leaned in against his ear. "You're beautiful when you come," he whispered. Tony turned to him in disbelief, only to find Loki smiling coyly at him.

Tony breathed out, smiling. "I—you—" He buried himself in Loki and muttered, "Hearing anything even slightly dirty out of your mouth, it's—" He rocked his hips against Loki, his cock too spent to respond to the new wave of arousal. Loki breathed out a laugh.

"I will have to keep that in mind."

"You will," Tony told him.

Tony wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, catching their breath. When they finally peeled apart and got cleaned up, they ended up going back to the couch to watch TV. Tony immediately curled back into Loki, laying against his chest and basking in the way Loki's arms came around him in return. He didn't know when he drifted off, just that Loki woke him by untangling their legs. "What time is it?" Tony mumbled.

"Seven," Loki answered, sitting up.

Tony jolted awake. He'd thought it was past midnight, easily. He checked the TV first, to find that it was absently set on the loading screen between episodes. He glanced back. Loki's mind was elsewhere, pensive. "How long was I asleep?"

Loki had to consider it first. "A little over a half hour," he guessed.

"Oh man," Tony fretted.

He'd been so content that he hadn't thought about fucking falling asleep, way to go. "Are you sure that you weren't the one on a flight today?" Loki teased him, interrupting his thoughts.

"I'm not sure," Tony answered, setting his feet on the floor. It was too early to call it a night, but he didn't know what to offer to do.

"It's cold," Loki said. Now that he'd said that, Tony guessed that it was. "Where is your thermostat?"

"It gets kind of drafty, the insulation isn't the best," Tony said. "I'll get it." He found his way in the dim light by memory. Outside, there was one street lamp on, snowflakes spinning through the yellow shaft of light. "It looks like we might get snowed in again," Tony said.

Loki stared past him, out the window. He had yet to move from the couch, but one hand waited restlessly on his knee. "It's a good thing I brought my bag then."

Tony smiled at that, coming back from the window. He paused for a moment, remembering that the heavy throw blanket that was ordinarily in a pile on the couch. It had been shoved away inside of his closet. He retrieved it, draping it over Loki's shoulders as he came to sit back down on the couch.

Loki extended an arm, offering Tony space beneath the blanket. Tony didn't pass up the opportunity. They sat there in silence, Tony's mind scrambling for something to do so that the night wasn't boring for Loki. "All of this snow reminds me of skiing," Loki said. His attention was back on the window, his voice mellow and reflective. "Thor and I used to go on trips together."

"When?" Tony asked.

"Every year for a while," Loki said. "We went last year." He closed his eyes slightly, leaning in against the couch. "We didn't go this year because we were too busy." Loki looked at him, his eyes alert and thoughtful.

Tony couldn't tell what he was thinking, but he did like the way Loki's gaze stayed steady on his. "So skiing's alright with Thor, but not Cincinnati, huh?" Tony asked.

Loki grinned, understanding Tony's point. "Perhaps if there'd been a ski resort it would've been more enjoyable." Loki combed his fingers through his hair, a few strands drawn loose from his bun. He must've put it up while Tony was asleep. "We've always talked about going to Vegas."

"I'm not sure who would get into more trouble," Tony said. It was kind of a scary thought, actually. "So you guys get along better outside of work."

Loki's lips flattened for a moment. "It depends on the day," he answered. Loki let his shoulders drop back against the couch, tugging the shared blanket as he did. Loki talked more about Thor than he did anybody else, but Tony still didn't understand that dynamic completely.

Tony pulled the blanket in a bit closer. When he glanced over, Loki was staring at him again. It was obvious he was thinking about something, but his expression was pleasant. "What're you thinking about?" Tony finally asked.

"I just—" Loki looked away, rubbing his hand against his jaw. "Didn't think this was going to happen," he said softly. Loki couldn't see the worry that crossed Tony's face. "I certainly didn't picture *how* we got here either," he said with some humor.

"What did you picture?" Tony asked. It was weird that even though they'd been close friends, they'd both had this whole other life they'd been living, pining after each other.

"I'd always imagined you'd wind up with someone else."

Tony frowned, resenting the resignation that Loki said it with. "And I always just figured you saw people and didn't want to tell me about it," Tony said. Loki raised an eyebrow. "You know. Because you didn't want it to ruin your image or something." Loki smiled, but it wasn't entirely comfortable. He was watching the far wall again instead in the dim colored light of the TV. "It's still hard for me to believe you haven't been with someone." The in years was unspoken, but in truth Tony had thought about it a little too much.

"That's because it comes easily to you," Loki said after a moment.

Tony shrugged. "It's not that hard to find *someone*," Tony said. "There are lots of people. Someone that you really like though, that's different." Loki seemed to agree with that sentiment, the brittle hint in his features gone. "And you're gorgeous, so I'm sure lots of people wanted to hook up with you."

Loki's eyebrows flinched, and then he was smiling slightly but staring at the coffee table instead. For the first time, Tony wondered if Loki didn't believe him. He forgot though, when Loki spoke. "Thor has tried to set me up several times in the past." Tony'd never heard about that. Even though it was exactly the kind of thing that Loki would go off about. "The worst was in our school days. He tried to set me up with his friend Amora because she was always hanging around with him and his friends, and he thought it was because she liked me. He was oblivious. She hated me. She wanted to be with him, and he was the only one that didn't see it."

Tony wasn't sure what to say.

Loki smiled, and it was one of the ones that Tony knew well. It was Loki's up to no good one. "What'd you do?" Tony asked.

"About that? Nothing," Loki said.

"Then what's with the face?" Tony asked, leaning in towards him.

Loki was smiling, remembering something. "It's just that her hating me wasn't undeserved," he said.

Tony waited a split second, but since Loki wasn't exactly being forthcoming he prompted, "What did you do?"

"You say that like you know I did something," Loki chided him, not without amusement.

"I know you too well," Tony countered.

Loki breathed in, the couch cushion shifting with the movement as he adjusted the blanket. "On school spirit day we'd spray on temporary hair dye to match the school colors and different things. I was always the one that had the spray." Tony tried to guess where this was going. "She had very light blond hair. It was almost translucent. So, when she asked for the black glitter spray, to be fair, I didn't know that the effect would be permanent."

"Then what's with that smile, huh?"

"I had hoped," Loki admitted. Tony smirked, shaking his head at how ridiculous Loki could be. Sure, it was a little mean spirited, but it wasn't like Tony had never seen Loki's faults. "When it washed out, it left this gray tinge that she could never get rid of. She ended up bleaching it, but that didn't go well either, so she tried dying it black for a while. Then she gave up and just let it grow out. She never really forgave me for it."

“It wasn’t a hundred percent your fault,” Tony said.

“It wasn’t,” Loki agreed.

Tony rested his chin against the back couch cushion, the soft blanket brushing against his cheek. It was nice hearing stories about Loki’s past. Loki didn’t talk about it that much, or himself aside from work stories, really.

“When’re you going to dye someone’s hair at work?” Tony asked.

“Work is a bit different,” Loki said.

“Yeah, I guess,” Tony said, letting all of his weight rest against the couch as he leaned his side into it. He pulled his knees up against his chest.

“What was your favorite hookup?” Loki asked.

Tony blinked at the sudden shift in the conversation, taking in Loki’s curious, somewhat reluctant expression. “Oh, uh—” That was kind of a tough question, mostly because he didn’t want to send the wrong message to Loki. “I guess—one time, I was with this girl that was really loud but it wasn’t fake, you know? She was just really into it so it was fun. Why?”

“I suppose I wonder sometimes if you’re bored,” Loki admitted.

“No,” Tony said, reaching out to set a hand on his shoulder. “I’m not. Trust me, I’m not.” He smiled at Loki, charmed by his uncertainty in all honesty. “I’m cool with the pace we’re at.”

“I know,” Loki answered.

Tony pursed his lips together. “Look, I kind of get it? I mean, I get that we’re wired differently, but also I didn’t go from make outs to getting tied up in a day.” He shrugged. He’d put a lot of thought in this too. “So I don’t expect for you to go from zero to sixty either, okay? That’d be kind of—I don’t know, now that I know you better, if you did, it’d just feel forced.” Tony put a flirty grin on. “But if you want to give me lingerie as a present, I wouldn’t be opposed to wearing it for you. Just saying.”

Loki’s smile was downright devious, but there was nothing but affection in the way he grabbed Tony’s knee, brushing his thumb across it. “I think I found one of those someones that I really like,” he said. He leaned in, and in the split second it took Tony to recognize that it was for a kiss, a new thrill ran through him.

It was tender and soft, the kind that Tony had never gotten enough of in his life.

“Tony,” Loki murmured fondly as Tony blinked his eyes open. Loki grinned at him. “I’m curious,” he said. “Did you have a lingerie kink before or after you read my story?”

Tony’s face turned bright red. “Uhh—” He stalled, turning away. “I have seen people in it, yes.”

Loki wasn’t taking his bullshit. “What about you in it?”

“No?”

“Tony,” Loki teased, tugging insistently at his knee.

“It was you, okay?” Tony complained then broke into a laugh. “Totally your fault. You should owe me a story for that alone, alright?”

Loki considered him for a moment before tapping a finger against his lip. “As a gift.”

“Really?!”

Loki smiled at him in reply. “Snooping through your hard drive was the best decision I ever made,” Tony declared.

“Don’t say it like that,” Loki said, setting a hand against his face. “If I didn’t like you so much I would’ve maimed you,” he mumbled into his hand.

“Good thing I’m likable then,” Tony said, trying to pry his foot out of his mouth. Loki dropped his hand, glancing over at Tony with fond exasperation.

“Good thing,” Loki echoed. Tony closed the gap on the couch between them, slumping against Loki. Loki sighed before wrapping his arm back around Tony. “Another episode since I don’t want to leave the couch and freeze to death?” Tony asked.

“Sure,” Loki said, reaching for the remote. This time, Tony wouldn’t nod off.

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony pulled his legs up into his computer chair, gripping the desk to wheel his chair from side to side with his arms as he stared at the clock. It was about an hour until the work day ended. Loki had already come down for his breaks. He'd been in a wonderful mood because he'd come out way ahead on some deal they were making and had even impressed his father. Tony had nothing to do. He had already trawled through the job boards. It wasn't going well.

He balanced a pencil with his top lip. Maybe he'd work on one of his programs until it was time to go.

He pulled up a game of Galaga instead.

The door squeaked open. Tony glanced up, hoping for something like a jammed copier to screw around with until it was time to go home. He didn't expect to see Thor.

Thor smiled broadly at him, walking casually towards Tony's desk. Tony's usual quick wit failed him. He'd never really gotten a good look at Thor in person. He had Loki's long hair, but half of it was braided back and there were a bunch of loose blond strands. Loki would never let his own be so messy.

He was ripped too, which didn't exactly ease Tony's discomfort. The three piece suit he wore couldn't hide that. He had a white shirt with a red tie under his light gray suit. Tony cleared his throat, trying to draw the words up.

"What can I help you with?" Tony asked, smiling the way he'd learned to when one of his dad's business clients dropped by.

Thor stopped in front of his desk. His confident smile didn't go anywhere as his clear blue eyes settled on Tony. "Tony, right?" His voice held a steady timbre, different from Loki's.

"Yep."

He should've worn something nicer to work. He should've been prepared to be sized up. Shiiit. Hadn't his dad always drilled that in his head? Look decent? Well, he'd said better than decent, but whatever. Tony had always hated that game. He decided to just cut to the chase. "I know that you know," Tony said.

Thor broke into a real smile. Tony got the sense he'd just charmed him. Thor stuck his hands in his pockets, a causal lean in his shoulders. "Know what?" Thor asked, eyes bright with amusement. That was like Loki.

Tony licked his lips, but his mouth was dry.

"I've got a friend," Thor said. "Who's been looking for someone that's good with computers to help develop apps. I've heard that you're exceptional." There was no mistaking the friendliness in his voice, but Tony wasn't sure what was going on. "He needs someone reliable. It's a full time job with benefits. You wouldn't know anyone that's looking, would you?"

"Uhh—" Tony breathed out.

Thor reached into his suit pocket, withdrawing a business card. He held it out for Tony. “If you think of anyone, tell them to give him a call.” Tony took the card, focused on Thor. He smiled down at Tony, almost expectant. “Tell him that Thor said to call.”

“Okay.” Tony logically thought that he should be on high alert, but he didn’t feel threatened. Just nervous. Thor turned to leave, and as he did, all Tony could do was watch him go, noting how different the two brothers were.

When the door shut, Tony glanced down at the card.

James Rupert Rhodes
Circuits Maximus
Electronics Design Firm

Tony traced his thumb over the phone number.

Thor was being...well it was really easy to think that he was doing it as a ‘get the hell out’ but Tony hadn’t gotten that vibe. He set a hand against his forehead. Loki must’ve told Thor about Tony trying to find a job somewhere else when he was drunk. That’d make sense.

Did he remember telling Thor that part? Tony figured Loki didn’t know that Thor had come down here. He’d probably have been on Thor’s trail if he’d known.

Tony stared at the card. He pressed a hand to his mouth. He’d at least look the guy up.

The company website was impressive, Tony had to give him that. In fact, the more he read on it, the more he thought it was a good idea. He considered just calling the card, but he had the nagging feeling that he should tell Loki.

Tony took out his phone. He wrote and erased the text three times before he sent it.

Tony wasn’t entirely surprised when Loki rushed in right before he was about to go home. “Did you call?” Loki asked.

“No.”

Loki crossed his arms. “Thor thinks highly of Rhodes.” His tie got caught under his arms, the emerald fabric pulling taut. He was breathing a little too quickly.

“Why are you annoyed?” Tony asked.

“I’m not,” Loki said. He rubbed his nose. “Thor is just—meddlesome.” He glanced back at Tony. “Are you going to call?”

“I think so.” He tugged at one of his hoodie strings, leaning back in his chair.

“Thor thinks you’ll have the job if you drop his name,” Loki said. Tony realized it wasn’t complete annoyance that he was picking up on, but anxiety. “His company is quite stable. We like them.”

“Are you cool with it?” Tony asked. It was more because he wanted to know where that anxiety was coming from than anything else. Loki’s astute gaze immediately snapped to his.

“I think it’s a wonderful opportunity.” He held Tony’s gaze, almost challenging him.

“What’ll you guys do with my job here?”

Loki turned away, crossing his arms tighter. “We will eliminate the position.” Loki pressed his lips together, thinking. “We will delegate the tasks that we can across existing personnel and call in a service company for the things that we can’t. And I’ve—I would hire you on as a consultant if we needed something that I’d want you for.”

Tony softly smiled at him in response. “I didn’t think that Thor would hook me up with a job.”

“Neither did I,” Loki said, and in that split second Tony read jealousy. Maybe Loki was mad that Thor beat him to it. “Apparently I said something about you looking for a new job, and Thor remembered that his friend was looking.” Loki reached for the knot in his tie. “I don’t know why he came to you without including me in on it though.”

“I think he wanted to see who I was,” Tony said. “Like he was curious.”

Loki’s eyes fell shut as he nodded. “I think the same.”

“You want to go grab dinner together?”

“I—” Loki seemed disproportionately disappointed. “Have to stay and finish some reports upstairs. I don’t think I’ll be finished until late.” He let his arms fall back down to his sides. “I just wanted to talk to you before you left.”

Tony stood up, grabbing his jacket off the back of his chair. “Tell, uh, tell Thor I appreciate it. It’s a really nice thing to do.”

“I know,” Loki said. Maybe he wasn’t upset with his brother after all. A soft, tired smile crossed Loki’s lips as he turned to Tony. “I hope it goes well. Thor said they’re located near here.” He took a step back from Tony’s desk. “I’ll see you tomorrow, then.”

Tony wished that Loki could stay. He wished that Loki was less dedicated to his job. “Text me when you get home tonight, alright?” Tony was in the habit of a good night text and he didn’t want to lose it. Loki nodded, then started for the door.

Tony dug his phone out of his pocket. Maybe he’d give this Rhodes guy a call before he went home.

Chapter End Notes

Just a little one this time. I wanted to give a shout out to all of you reading along, I love hearing from you!

Chapter 24

“And the whole office is on the same floor and there’re these huge windows along the walls and it’s the second floor so you can’t see everything, but you can see the cafe across the street and some of the city skyline and they don’t do cubicles so you can see everyone’s desk is covered with nerdy stuff, even the sales reps.” Tony was the one pacing the floor today as Loki sat on the couch, doing his best to follow along after Tony had plowed through a ton of tech jargon he knew Loki didn’t really understand but Tony wanted to share with him anyway.

“Plus James is hilarious, he was a little stiff at first, but once we’d been talking for ten minutes we got on great. He wouldn’t exactly be my boss either, we’d be on the same level as co-workers, and they’re probably going to put me on some of the development projects because I can do a lot more than what they were initially looking for.”

Tony wanted to sit on the arm of the couch by Loki, but he couldn’t sit still. He hadn’t been this excited about something in a long time, besides things that revolved around dating Loki, of course.

“Oh, and,” Tony said, starting back in the other direction, “they have super casual Fridays and apparently it’s kind of this contest between everyone to see who can wear the worst outfit. There’s some guy that wins pretty much every week.”

He paused long enough for Loki to smile, half to the side, and say, “It seems like a good fit.”

Tony nodded enthusiastically. “I think so too.” He avoided bumping into Loki as he paced around the couch again. Loki was sitting with one leg crossed and his arm along the back of the couch, hanging out from him as his fingers curled and uncurled sporadically. “You’re going to have to come over and see it.”

“I will,” Loki promised, his eyes drifting past Tony to the clock. “I have to go back upstairs.” As he rose, Tony came around the front of the couch, crowding Loki’s space. He smiled up at him, setting his hands on Loki’s hips. Loki flinched.

“Tony,” he warned. “Just because you put in your two weeks doesn’t mean we don’t have to be careful anymore.”

Tony let go, stepping back, but there was something stubborn in his expression. “You worry too much.”

Loki let out a sigh, eyes drifting towards the clock again. “Maybe so.” He straightened his tie. “I’ll see you later.” Tony watched him walk to the door, almost entirely to admire his ass in those pants, before pacing around the couch again. There was so much he was going to have to do. He could put pictures of Loki and him on his new desk! He glanced at the mini fridge. He was definitely bringing that with him.

Tony glanced across the dim basement. This place and this job had meant a lot to him when he’d first dumped his father’s dreams for him. It’d been entirely different from Stark Industries. His role had been entirely different. And he’d needed that. But he was ready for better.

And it was going to be so much better. He liked all of his co-workers, even though he hadn’t started with them yet. He liked Rhodes and he liked the business and he liked the newness of it all.

And he wasn’t losing Loki. He’d miss seeing him everyday, but they could work it out to meet up on a long lunch break or something. Tony was so excited. Everything was going exactly right for

once.

Tony was probably supposed to be saying something to start the conversation, but he was distracted. Loki had come down for his break as usual, but instead of toying with things on Tony's desk or stealing something from his fridge, he'd laid down across the couch as Tony's keyboard clicked a soothing rhythm. The tension in his eyebrows as he stared up at the ceiling suggested that he was irked about something. His legs were longer than the couch though, and Tony couldn't help himself from admiring the way Loki's slim fit suit stretched against his torso as it tried to accommodate him in the position. Tony licked his lips.

He cleared his throat. Loki hadn't said anything yet. "Something going on upstairs?" Tony guessed.

Loki was quiet for a moment before a different expression flitted across his face, but it was hard to read. "One of our business partners is being difficult," he said.

"Oh." That was nothing new. Loki got like this in dealing with them sometimes. Tony grabbed his soda, using the opportunity to admire Loki again. He started remembering the scenes he'd read about on that couch rather shamelessly.

After a while, Loki's gaze drifted over to him. It was more open this time. Curious, maybe. He didn't say anything though. His green eyes darted up to the clock behind Tony before he started studying the room instead.

"Hey, uh," Tony said. "I was thinking about this the other night, and Thor doesn't know how we got together, right?" He'd kind of worried that Loki had said more than he'd meant to. "About your writing," Tony clarified.

Loki's eyes went wide for a moment. "No," he said. He swallowed, looking away. "No. No, definitely not." He reached for his cufflink, twisting it. "As far as Thor knows, we met when I asked you to fix my laptop." He glanced at Tony. "And it's staying that way."

"No, yeah," Tony said, a bit startled. "Let's keep it that way." He let out a sigh of relief. He'd really rather Thor not know about it either.

"He seems thrilled to be in on the secret," Loki said with no small amount of bitterness in his voice. "He keeps making faces at me when he sees me return from somewhere. I was down for a meeting with the fourth floor, and when I returned, Thor had this amused expression like I'd snuck off to see you instead." Loki sighed, reaching one arm back to tuck his hand behind his head.

"James told me that Thor said he didn't have an e-mail address," Tony said. "Then he told James to send it by carrier pigeon and made a hand motion like a bird flying. James joked that Thor should think twice about losing his IT guy."

Loki rolled his eyes. "He has an e-mail address." He glanced at the clock behind Tony again. Although Loki hadn't said it, Tony thought he was more paranoid about Thor interrupting one of his breaks. "He has a weird sense of humor," Loki dismissed it.

"You do too," Tony said.

Loki tossed him a dirty look, running his fingers along his tie. "I have a wonderful sense of humor. It is hardly my fault if others fail to appreciate it."

Tony pouted his lips at Loki, mocking him.

Loki sneered, twisting his tie. It was utterly distracting. Tony had a thing for his tie now, and those long fingers playing with that tie, and it was all Loki's fault. "We should go out to celebrate on your last day," Loki said, drawing Tony out of his thoughts. Loki's gaze was fixed on his tie. The light caught its shine, waving back and forth.

"Oh. Yeah," Tony said. He was excited, he really was. "That'd be great."

Loki smiled slightly, then turned his head to glance at the clock behind Tony before running his fingers across his tie again.

Tony wheeled around in his chair to look at the clock. Loki was ten minutes over on his break. "Are you going to give me a kiss goodbye before you head back upstairs?" Tony asked, half hopeful, half just doing it because Loki's anxiety about his break made him uneasy too.

Loki scoffed. He sat up, his hair messed to the side from where he'd been lying on it. "I do not need to press our luck. That would be the one time that someone came down here to have something fixed."

"They all just call me to come up to them," Tony said. Nobody wanted to trek down here.

Loki rose, stretching as he did. His suit pulled taut with the motion again. "Try to behave yourself down here," Loki said. He adjusted the knot in his tie. "I would hate to have to let HR know that you were reading something *unwholesome*," he said, eyes flashing.

Tony smiled at the nerve of the guy. "And I'd hate to let them know you were writing something *unwholesome*."

"I don't write while I'm at work," Loki said primly.

Tony folded his arms over his chest, unsure of whether or not to believe him. Still, he was feeling pretty good from their banter until he saw unhappiness appear on Loki's face as he glanced back at Tony. Probably because he was going back upstairs. "Behave," Loki said, starting for the door.

"Don't I always?" Tony asked, but Loki didn't turn around. Tony watched the door fall shut, frowning.

Tony was actually fixing something on the company website when he caught a whiff of the peculiar smell Loki's fake cigarettes produced. At first he thought he was imagining it. Then it was there, stronger, and Tony was getting up.

He flinched at the cold as he dragged the fire escape door open.

He didn't see Loki.

Tony stuck his head out. He spotted Loki leaning against the wall, a slim trail of smoke curling up around him. "You know, you look like one of those cool asshole kids that school warned us to stay away from," Tony said.

Loki smirked against his cigarette. He blew out a puff of smoke, his fingers lingering against his lips. "Maybe I am."

Tony burst out laughing.

“Yeah, okay,” he said. “You know I know those are fake, right?”

“They’re better than giving in to the impulse,” Loki explained, his mouth caught in half of a smirk as if he couldn’t decide whether to laugh along with Tony or cuss him out.

“It’s too cold to stand out here with you,” Tony said. “I’ll be inside when you’re done with your James Bond impersonation.”

“No one’s paying me for product placement,” Loki snarked back as Tony let the door fall shut. Tony returned to his desk, expecting Loki to come inside right away. But the minutes crept by and Tony was lost in coding when he heard the door open. Loki brushed the snow off his shoulders, oblivious to the sprinkling in his hair. He only smiled wordlessly at Tony before heading upstairs.

The two weeks went by faster than Tony could keep track of. Loki’s breaks followed the same pattern, with him getting progressively moodier about whatever he said was going on upstairs and disappearing to smoke outside. He brought Tony coffee a couple of times and even snuck downstairs for lunch one day, which had never happened before. Tony was utterly content with the extra attention.

On his last day, Tony brought a huge cardboard box to pack up what remained of his stuff. He gleefully imagined how he was going to rearrange all of it on his desk at Circuits Maximus.

Tony tugged open his desk drawer, papers scattering because he’d stuffed it too full. Tony started sorting them into piles. He reached for a few that had gotten jammed up in the corner of the drawer.

A waxy square, perfectly folded, fell out of the crumpled pile.

Tony picked it up, turning it over. Loki had given him this. Well, Loki had given him the pastry wrapped up in the waxy paper, and Tony had folded it up and kept it as if doing that made it possible for him to keep Loki’s affection too. He stared at it, heartache seeping in.

He was lucky though. When he’d had this paper, he’d never thought that he could ever be where he was now with Loki.

Tony set it on the corner of his desk, trying to ignore the heaviness that snuck into his chest.

He threw some of his erasers and a screw driver he’d forgotten about into the box. Then he tossed away a carryout menu, glancing at the papers beneath it. The corner of a business card stuck out.

Tony knew what it was before he pulled it free.

Loki’s password was still scrawled across the bottom. Tony smiled at it, his heart sinking further. Carefully, Tony tucked it into his wallet so it wouldn’t be lost.

The drawer didn’t take that much longer to do, and the stress ball he found inside was helpful. Tony played with that for a while before clearing out the last of his desk drawers.

Then it was time for the surface. That was a little different. That’d feel more real.

Tony reached for his mug of pens. It was yellow with a picture of a black cat on it. Really, it'd just been something cheap that Tony had found when he first moved into town. Yet Loki had picked it up saying, "Do you think this is entirely professional?" He'd turned it around, smirking at the pens, while Tony's heart had pounded until he'd realized that Loki was only pulling his leg.

"Do you think loitering around down here is entirely professional?" Tony had quipped back at him, scowling when Loki stole one of his pens.

Tony still hadn't gotten that one back. He sighed, setting the mug in the box. Next came the sticky notes that Loki had given him with a jab about staying organized, and his knickknacks, some of which had come from way back home.

Tony didn't allow himself to think. He packed everything that was his away, making one final sweep of the room. Then he stood with his hands on his hips, staring at the desk that had become his home in the past year. Well, he wasn't going to miss being in the basement or the boring work, but he'd...miss it. Miss being down here with Loki.

He turned to the clock, checking Loki's schedule out of habit. It was about twenty minutes until the end of the day. Loki was going to meet up with him somewhere to celebrate.

Tony glanced back at the couch.

He wandered towards it, sinking down in the middle.

He let his gaze drift over the room, rubbing his chin. He brushed a brown curl away from where it'd flopped down on his forehead. Tony dug his phone out of his pocket and snapped a photo of his desk. He wished he'd had the thought before he'd packed things up, but he stood and started snapping photos of the room anyway.

Then he sank back down on the couch, trying not to give in to the restless tension inside of him. He wanted to bolt as much as he wanted to curl up on the couch.

Maximus Circuits would be a better place. He knew that. He was excited. Fuck, was he excited. And it wasn't like he was losing Loki.

He was just losing the chance to have wild, forbidden couch sex. Tony breathed out a laugh at his own joke. The door opened. Tony sat up straight, not sure who it was.

Loki was striding toward him, gaze intense before the box on Tony's desk captured his attention. His head turned, and then all Tony could see was a black curtain of hair. "You're early," Tony said.

"I thought I would just leave with you," Loki said.

"Isn't that a little scandalous?" Tony teased.

"Not anymore." He turned to Tony, really studying him, as if memorizing him there. Tony shifted in his spot, a little unnerved. "Shall we?" Loki asked.

"What?" He glanced back at the clock. "It's ten minutes before the end of the day."

Loki shrugged. "So?" He raised an eyebrow. "Maybe we can be scandalous on your last day."

Tony smiled, getting up. "A whole ten minutes," he teased. He walked towards Loki at the desk.

“Let’s not stand around for it,” Loki said. He breathed in, straightening his suit as he watched Tony.

Tony reached for the box. Loki’s attention lingered on it for a moment before he smiled sharply. “I thought we’d go to your favorite burger place from before.”

“What? Really? Yesss,” Tony said, hoisting the box up into his arms. “Lead the way then.” Loki chuckled, going silent as they left. The door fell shut and they left without any bravado, Loki walking close as Tony balanced the box.

No one noticed them on their way out to the parking lot, or if they did, Tony didn’t notice. Loki offered to drive them, letting Tony put the box away in his own car before they headed back over to his. Tony slid inside of Loki’s exceptionally nice car. Loki reached for his sunglasses, turning the radio up.

When they got to the restaurant, Tony was starving. They got their quiet spot in the back like last time. Tony immediately initiated brushing his foot over Loki’s, beaming at the smile that quirked up Loki’s lips.

Loki flipped open the drink menu. “Get whatever you want,” he said. “It’s on me.”

“Great. I’m going to order everything,” Tony said. Loki rolled his eyes, but the smile didn’t leave his lips. “You know, I don’t really need a menu. I always get the same thing.”

Loki hummed, his foot brushing against Tony’s as his eyes scanned the menu. Tony stared out over the restaurant, energetic. They’d gotten in at just the right time. A line was starting to form by the door. Tony smiled to himself, remembering last time when he’d waited in the alcove with Loki.

Their order got in quickly too, which was nice. And Loki was drinking a beer, which was unexpected but appreciated, especially because Tony got to see him try to subtly lick the foam off his top lip. Tony’d hid his smile behind his burger.

Tony plunged his fry down into a puddle of ketchup. “It’s nice to not worry about somebody seeing us,” he thought aloud.

Loki’s beer glass had been held to his lips. He set it down, the glass making a soft thud on the table. “It is, isn’t it?” He reached for his tie and then abandoned the motion halfway through. “Did you worry about it often when we were out before?”

Tony shrugged. The fries were extra salty and he loved them. Hurrying to finish his bite he said, “I mean, not until we saw Thor the one time. And at work. But I was thinking, you know, it’s not like we didn’t before, but we can go out anywhere we want now.”

“Yeah.” Loki took a bite from his burger, and Tony took the moment to poke at his foot, more obnoxious than flirty. Loki poked him right back. “Are you nervous about starting on Monday?”

“No,” Tony said. “Well, sort of. But I think it’s going to be fine.”

Loki nodded, taking a bite out of his burger. It was subtle, but Tony thought he looked kind of sad. Tony pursed his lips, not sure what he should say.

“These are exceptionally greasy,” Loki commented, reaching for a napkin from the huge pile on the table.

“That’s why they’re good,” Tony told him.

Loki wiped his fingers off, pools of grease standing the paper napkin. “They’re good for my doctor too,” Loki said. Tony wasn’t sure what that meant. “They’re keeping him employed,” Loki explained.

Tony snorted out a laugh, then reached for his beer. “I don’t like thinking about it like that.”

Loki seemed pleased with himself.

They ate in comfortable silence for a bit before Tony noticed the worried crease in Loki’s brow, like he was lost in his own thoughts. “Hey, uh, you know this means we’re just going to be able to see each other all the time now, right?”

Loki glanced up at him, eyebrows actually scrunched together now. “I know it does,” he said, almost confused. “Tony, this is a *good move*.”

Tony nervously rubbed the back of his neck. Loki’s expression softened with sympathy. “I don’t want us to have to sneak around. You can do much better than the job you had with us, and I think Circuits Maximus is a good fit for you.”

“Then—” Tony licked his lips. “You seem sad,” he blurted. Shit, it seemed whiny when he said it, but he didn’t know what else to say.

Loki’s shoulders sank as he took in a deep breath, staring at Tony. “Of course I’m sad that you’re leaving, Tony. I liked having you there.” He brushed his hair back his ear. “But this is better for you, and I want you to have better, Tony.”

Loki’s voice ached as he said it, and he didn’t look any happier, even if his words were trying for it. Tony’s gaze dropped down to the table. A moment later, he felt Loki’s hand on his shoulder. “I don’t want you to pass on this opportunity,” Loki said. Tony breathed out, a self-soothing smile on his lips.

It hurt. It really fucking hurt, even though he was excited. “I’m going to miss having you there too,” he admitted.

Loki squeezed his shoulder before letting go.

“Think of how great it’ll be for you not to have to be there when Thor inevitably blabs about us,” Loki said, halfway between teasing and bitter.

Tony smiled, but really he just felt tired. Suddenly, Loki was stealing a chunk of fries from his plate. “Hey!”

Loki shoved them in his mouth, eyes dancing with glee. Tony scowled. Loki didn’t have any fries that he could steal back.

“Whatever, I’m ordering another beer,” Tony pouted.

“By all means,” Loki answered.

They didn’t talk about anything important for the rest of dinner. It wasn’t until Loki was signing the receipt that Tony remembered, “Hey, why don’t you order a couple of Moscow Mules? I want to ask drunk Loki what he’s been writing.” The glare Loki shot him could’ve singed a hole.

“What?”

“You can’t ask me sober?”

“Well I could, but you wouldn’t be as cute about it.”

Loki set the pen back down on the table. “I suppose it will just remain a mystery until I share it with you.”

Tony tugged up the zipper on his jacket. “That’s why I wanted to ask drunk Loki.”

“I’m well aware.”

Loki smiled softly to himself, getting up. Tony stood with him. As they started for the door, Loki’s arm came around his back, carefully navigating him around a group of people standing near the door. It felt protective. And nice. Definitely nice.

But most importantly it was out in the open, and Tony had a whole lot more moments like it to look forward to.

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony set his drink down on his kitchen table, Loki following behind him with a plastic bag in hand. They'd gone to see a play (it was a comedy, and Tony had loved it), then out to lunch, and Tony was on the high of a good mood.

The bottles on Tony's fridge door rattled as Loki yanked it open. "There's no room in here for leftovers."

Tony turned around. "What do you mean?" He walked over, deliberately touching more of Loki's hand than he needed to as he took the bag away from him. Then Tony brushed against him as he leaned into the fridge, pulling out a pizza box and sliding it up between the top of the fridge and some drink bottles. He pushed a jar of pickles back until the jars around it buckled. Then Tony set their carryout boxes in the newly opened space. "See? Easy," Tony said, crumpling the plastic bag and tossing it at a bin filled with other plastic bags.

"Something's going to fall out," Loki said.

"No it won't," Tony said with the confidence of someone who'd tried his luck a hundred times before. He eased the door shut. "And now we're ready for dessert," Tony said, pointedly eyeing Loki up and down.

Loki breathed out a laugh. "*Smooth*, Tony. Really smooth. An absolute charmer. How ever did I develop a crush on you?" Loki pressed his fingertips to his forehead. "I don't know if it's the nicknames or the bad puns that are worse, really."

"Rhodey loves my bad puns," Tony said proudly.

"It's Rhodey now?" Loki asked, exasperation slipping through. In the moment it took Tony to wince at the sudden jerk in Loki's tone, Loki fumbled to recover, smiling stiffly. "I suppose it was only a matter of time until he got one of your infamous nicknames," Loki said. He put his fingertips to his lips. He'd tried for warm, but Tony could hear the burn and Loki seemed to know it too.

To be fair, Tony had spent half of lunch talking about Rhodey, but he'd called him James. "Well, it is better than James. James sounds like he should have a cowboy hat or something," Tony said, trying to ignore the awkward tension. "Or maybe blue hair. Who am I thinking of?"

Loki took a deep breath in through his nose. He reached for his tie, toying with it as his expression flitted between agreeable and miffed. Suddenly, Tony found himself abandoning his fixation on the tie and instead glaring right back. "You're not—jealous, are you?"

Loki's mouth dropped open, something indignant on the tip of his tongue. Tony set his hand on his hip. "I'm only dating you right now, I thought I made that clear—"

"—I know that," Loki said. He turned his face to the side like the kitchen cabinets were really that interesting, refusing to make eye contact with Tony. He tugged at his tie. A little spark of amusement crept into Tony. Loki was *flustered*.

"But you are jealous," Tony said, stepping closer. He'd gone from annoyed to impish remarkably fast. "Aren't you?"

Loki stood his ground, widening his stance as he looked down his nose at Tony. “I am *not* jealous.”

“Yes you are,” Tony said in a sing-song voice.

“You do talk about him an awful lot,” Loki said. “But that doesn’t mean I’m jeal—”

“You are! Just say it. You’re jealous.”

Loki crossed his arms, sneering at Tony.

Tony poked his bicep. “Are you going to do something about it? Huh?” Feeling especially playful, Tony was bold enough to go for his tie. He grabbed it, forcing Loki to bend in closer. Tony dropped his voice down lower. “Tie me up and show me who’s boss, huh?” Tony felt himself flushing as he said it. Loki’s tie, Loki’s stupid wonderful kink of a tie was in his hand and Loki had no idea what that did to him. Tony was distracted by Loki’s lips, so he didn’t get a chance to check his full expression. “Blindfold me and have your wicked way with me?” Tony pushed up onto his toes, catching Loki’s soft lips in a searing kiss.

Loki took a moment to respond, and then one hand was in Tony’s hair as Loki’s warm tongue slid over his.

A hand caught Tony’s, prying it off the tie as cold air greeted Tony’s mouth. Loki was still gripping Tony’s hand when Tony blinked his eyes open to stare at Loki in surprise. The kiss had been pretty damn good, but Loki seemed pissed. Okay, but clearly aroused too. “I’m not going to tie you up because I’m jealous.”

“So you are jealous,” Tony said, like he’d won a gotcha.

Loki released his hand, stepping back and straightening his tie. “I trust you, Tony,” he said slowly.

Tony folded his arms over his chest. It didn’t exactly feel great not to be getting the action he wanted and to see Loki backing away. “When will you tie me up?” He knew he was being forward and maybe pushy, but he was feeling daring from the good day and impatient too.

Loki let out a sigh before pressing his lips together as he lost himself in thought. “When I—want to reward you.” Tony pursed his lips to the side. “It’s not supposed to be a punishment like you’re making it out to be, I’d rather do it when I want to savor—”

“—that’s not what I said—wait, did you say savor?” Tony asked.

Loki’s cheeks tinted pink but he set his jaw. “Yes.”

Tony rubbed his fingers along his beard. “Just when I think you can’t get any more precious—”

“—I am not precious—”

“—you’re my precious, just like Smeagol, now to backup for a second, about tying me up, I just thought you’d like it and I’d enjoy it, but I get what you’re saying.”

Loki’s eyes narrowed for a moment as he thought, gaze set on Tony. “You read everything I wrote. You know I never set it up like that.” It was strange. Tony was getting the sense that Loki was offended. “I won’t do it like that,” Loki asserted. “It’s only for fun or not at all.”

Well yeah, Loki kind of had a point, but Tony hadn’t exactly been thinking that deep about it. He’d

been thinking about what he wanted. What he'd like. But now that he had to think back on it, Loki's stories that had the restraints usually revolved around him tying Tony up and then... spending forever describing how gorgeous Tony was and every minor detail and a bazillion flowery foreplay things before...yeah Loki definitely had a point. "I—yeah. Can I just be completely frank? I am really horny and I want you."

Loki broke into a smile in spite of himself, and it was real and amused and adoring just the way Tony loved. Just like that, the tension seemed to snap and dissolve.

"I'm sorry," Tony said. "Forget the tying up thing. Can we just skip to part where I get to act on my pent up sexual frustration? Because there's a lot of it."

Loki brushed his hand over his hair, holding the bun at the back for a moment as the fond expression refused to leave his face. "Like I said. You are a charmer." He smiled, letting his hand fall to his side. "I would prefer your bedroom to the couch, if we're being frank."

Tony couldn't believe Loki had said it. He loved it. "Me too," Tony said, grabbing his hand. He tugged Loki along as if he'd get lost, winning a laugh from Loki in the first couple eager steps.

Tony pulled Loki into bed with him, Loki's long limbs tangling with his as Loki's weight pinned him against the mattress. "Just so we're clear, I'm fine with anything," Tony said, running his hands down Loki's lamentably clothed sides. The dress shirt was thin and he could feel ribs beneath it. "So if you need to do something for, you know, writing reference, have at it."

"You are awfully cheeky today," Loki complimented him, catching his lips before he could come up with a clever reply. "I'll have to consider what I need *reference* for." Tony tugged the elastic band out of Loki's hair, catching it so that it went down onto his own wrist. Then he dug his fingers into that glorious mane of hair as Loki's hips rocked down against him in response.

"Man," Tony gasped. "I'm going to have to be cheeky more often."

"You were not the only one with pent up frustration," Loki muttered back. "Lunch was torture."

He was about to ask for more details, but then Loki sucked Tony's bottom lip and he forgot completely.

Tony moaned into his mouth, hands fisting into his shirt's starched fabric. He could not keep his hands still. Loki cradled Tony's head in his hands, utterly controlling the kiss to Tony's delight. Tony cupped Loki's ass through the silky fabric of his dress slacks, groaning when he felt Loki tilt his ass towards Tony's touch, his kiss becoming distracted.

Tony guided his thumbs over Loki's hips, pressing in and marveling at how Loki didn't just accept his touch but sought it, breaking their kiss and biting his own lip as his eyes fell shut. Tony desperately memorized the image.

Tony reached one hand for Loki's tie, almost trembling. The knot didn't give at first and then Loki was sitting up and straddling him, yanking the tie from his own throat and tossing the thin strip on the bed. Tony stared as Loki flipped his hair back over his shoulders and out of the way before bending back down to Tony's lips again.

Loki pressed a kiss to the corner of Tony's mouth before Tony recovered his thoughts and reached for the first button on Loki's shirt. Loki's lips didn't leave his own through the first couple buttons, but when Tony reached where their chests were pressed together, Loki didn't accommodate him at all. Tony set one hand on Loki's shoulder. "Are you going to let me undress

you, babe?”

“I would like to undress you,” Loki countered, his thumbs brushing against Tony’s cheeks. Instantly, Tony felt himself relaxing, warmth pooling inside of him with each stroke.

Tony blinked, vaguely surprised at what such a slight touch could do to him. “Okay.”

Loki’s kisses trailed down his neck again before he sat up. Tony had felt Loki’s hard cock press against him, but seeing the outline of it straining against his dress slacks was another thing. Loki’s hands trailed down Tony’s arms, and as Tony tore his gaze away he looked up to find Loki smiling softly down at him. He grabbed the seam of Tony’s shirt, gently pulling the fabric up and away from him. Tony stared up at him, bare chested, suddenly aware of how exposed he felt.

Loki cupped his neck with one hand, slowly trailing kisses down his chest, tongue experimentally circling a peaked nipple. Tony moaned without meaning too. It was overwhelming. Loki’s hands explored with all of the ease in the world, warm fingertips pressing against muscle and over bone and stroking the hair along his happy trail back and forth.

Tony stared up at the ceiling, vulnerable but still in bliss. Sometimes, maybe because they’d been friends for so long, he forgot how utterly new everything sexual was with Loki until the moment came.

Loki’s hands paused at the button on Tony’s jeans. His eyebrows pinched down for a moment before he carefully peeled them open, the zipper dragging down with an audible hiss. Tony’s erection was still trapped by his briefs. “Fast,” Tony begged. “Please, pull them off fast.”

Loki masked his surprise quickly, obeying Tony without a word. The moment Tony’s jeans were off he was struggling to get out of his briefs himself, and only after he had them off did he notice the lust in Loki’s hungry gaze.

He moved towards Tony just as Tony pushed himself up on his elbows. “I want—it’s your turn,” he breathed.

Loki stilled, watching Tony expectantly from where he was sitting. Tony sat up.

He bent forward. Loki’s breath brushed against his cheek as Tony bent his head down, lacking the patience that Loki had as he undid the buttons with shaking fingers. “You’re tense,” Tony noted, thinking aloud.

“Yes, well, broad daylight isn’t exactly my first choice for this,” Loki breathed out.

Tony paused. “Why not?” Was he not what Loki had been expecting? Did he look disappointing?

Loki tilted his chin up. “My chest isn’t exactly normal.” Tony studied him for a moment, but Loki was staring pointedly at the ceiling, waiting. The ends of his fully unbuttoned shirt were clasped in Tony’s hands.

Tony slowly pulled Loki’s shirt open, marveling at the expanse of sleek muscle. He was gorgeous, the jerk. Tony glanced up. Loki’s frown had morphed into a grimace as he stared out the far window instead. Tony looked back at Loki’s chest. “What am I supposed to be seeing?” He asked quietly.

“I know it’s too thin,” Loki said just as quietly. “I’ve been told often enough.”

Tony pulled the shirt down from Loki’s shoulders, kissing his cheek as he did. “I think you’ve been

living in that guy's shadow too long," Tony said, easing the sleeves from Loki's arms to finally abandon the shirt on the bed. "I'm not ripped either, and I haven't heard any complaints out of you."

Loki smiled, staring down at the bed. "No. I've just complained about work while you've stared at my tie."

"You noticed?!"

"I've noticed for a while now," Loki said. "It's somewhat hard to miss."

Tony shook his head, grinning. Loki reached for the tie, still on the bed, and curled it along his fingers.

Suddenly he snapped it taut, resting his chin against it as his green eyes darted to Tony. "What is it about the tie, Tony?"

It was almost coy the way he said it, and Tony couldn't tell for the life of him if the seductive purr was spoken or in his head. It was hard to tell fantasy and reality apart in the moment. "Don't act like you don't know," Tony deflected. "Are you going to take your pants off?"

Loki watched him a moment before lowering the tie into his lap. "If you tell me what it is about the tie."

"The blindfold thing," Tony said, grabbing Loki's belt buckle and unclasping it in a flash. "Brat," Tony muttered, yanking the belt through the loops and tossing it on the bed. When he glanced up there was something playful in Loki's eyes and Tony had no idea what kind of game they were getting into. "Don't you remember?" Tony challenged him.

Loki studied him for a moment before declaring, "No."

Tony's mouth dropped open. "You wrote it!"

"I don't remember everything I wrote," Loki said. "There was a lot."

Tony pouted his lips, unsure of whether he should believe him. "I don't," Loki insisted. "I can't remember when a tie came into it and I thought you were teasing about it before—should I look it up?" Loki thought aloud, and for a second Tony was convinced Loki was about to whip out his phone to check.

"Okay. I'm taking your pants off," Tony announced. The joking had made him feel a hell of a lot more at ease, but as his hands set on Loki's slacks a shiver of anticipation struck. Tony breathed in, acutely aware that in just a few seconds he was going to see Loki completely naked.

And Tony kind of gawked the moment they were off, not realizing it until Loki's uneasy shuffling caught his attention.

Loki looked good in the hazy afternoon light of Tony's bedroom. Thin slats of light from the window blinds laid across Loki's chest and dipped over his thighs. His hair had fallen back down around his shoulders. It was curled just at the ends and slick with product. His long fingers twitched against the tie, twisting it in his lap as if he could cover up the heavy erection there. It had flushed darker than the rest of his skin, drawing even more attention to itself.

"I'm not sure I want to be blindfolded now," Tony said with the same charm that'd landed lots of other people in his bed. Loki grinned at it, wringing the tie as he did.

“What a shame. I was just about to suggest something.”

Intrigued, Tony asked, “And that is?”

Loki considered him for an intense moment before saying, “Let me blindfold you so I can repay the favor from last time.”

Tony was conflicted. On one hand, he’d just gotten to see Loki naked, *finally*, and he wanted to stare, alright? On the other hand, it was kind of a huge fantasy and Tony could get on board with that. The second one won out. “Deal,” Tony said.

Loki grinned, and in that instant, Tony saw a flash of something feral that he’d come to assign to story Loki only. It wasn’t his fault if his heart skipped a few more beats as Loki brought the tie around his eyes, gently securing it before checking it with a firm tug. Loki’s warm hand pressed his shoulder, and Tony sank with it down onto the mattress, the cool sheets pillowing against the skin of his exposed back.

Some fuzzy light still filtered through the tie, so Tony closed his eyes to make it pitch black instead. He’d dreamed about this scenario forever.

Tony felt hot breath against his chest and held his own breath as he waited for Loki’s lips to follow, but they found his thigh instead. Loki trailed kisses up the tender skin, sucking and laving so that each new spot sent a fresh spark down Tony’s spine.

Tony reached out, seeking the silky strands on Loki’s head. He found his chest instead. There was a low laugh from Loki at his uncoordinated hands. “You know how it’s going to end,” Loki said. “I didn’t say how we were going to get there.”

Tony grinned. There was the guy that had written all that stuff.

He gasped in a breath as Loki laid over him, aware of just warm, bare skin, everywhere. “You can pull the blindfold off whenever you want to,” Loki reminded him.

Tony found Loki’s shoulders. “Who said I want to?” He squeezed them. “I’m keeping it on the whole time.” He felt Loki’s lips and eagerly opened his mouth to let him in, running his hands down Loki’s shoulder blades and dipping to his spine. He wanted to memorize everything.

When Loki pulled away, it was only to return to Tony’s neck, sucking at the skin there with more confidence than before. Tony started losing himself in the sensation of it, his senses heightened in the darkness.

Loki seemed intent on mapping every inch of him again, fingertips brushing along the pulse in his wrist, over the ridge of his collarbones, the dips in his hipbones that Loki visited repeatedly. Each movement along his skin had Tony holding his breath and then letting go. He couldn’t accurately predict what would happen. Sometimes it was a hand followed by soft lips, or that hand would pause and settle over him, cupping his side in a way that was almost comforting before moving on again.

With anybody else Tony would’ve complained, desperate for the end, but with Loki he found himself unwinding. If Loki was content to explore, Tony was content to let him. It felt unbelievably good to be doted on like this. He trusted Loki, and he liked feeling like the center of Loki’s world for a moment.

Maybe that’s why he wasn’t paying too close of attention when Loki’s lips trailed up his thigh, surprising him when a tongue trailed down his cock. Tony mumbled something incoherent. The

same fingertips that had been teasing him became firm, gripping the base while wet heat engulfed the head.

Tony clasped at the sheets beside him. A second hand was dipping lower, tracing the seam between his balls while the other started to tug, drawing another moan out of Tony that sounded embarrassingly loud to his own ears.

Shifting his hips, Tony tried for more friction as cold air met the heat left by Loki's wandering tongue. Loki. Right, holy shit, this was Loki, wonderful Loki that Tony couldn't get over. Every time he thought he had figured him out there was something new and shit, even the hesitant little licks were doing it for him.

Tony had to see him, he just had to. Tony writhed his head to the side, subtly he hoped, slightly dislodging the tie so that he had a crevice to peak out from.

Loki's head was bowed in a curtain of black hair, and all Tony could see was his bare ass swaying slightly as he sucked. One slender arm moved with a tug. Loki leaned his head to the side and suddenly Tony could see Loki's face, eyes closed as he licked up the swollen cock and took it into his mouth.

It was too much. Tony moaned purely at the visual and Loki's eyes flicked open, towards him.

Their gaze met, and for one incredibly long moment they held it, equally surprised. Loki let go of him with a wet pop. Then, suddenly, a crooked smile lit up Loki's face. "Cheater," he chided.

Tony breathed out a laugh. "In my defense, you're gorgeous."

"I know a suck up when I hear one," Loki muttered, but it was still fond. He sat up for a moment before deciding to crawl over Tony, tugging the blindfold completely off as his tongue traced Tony's bottom lip before sliding in, Tony hugging him to his chest.

Tony didn't process much but heat and all of the bare skin pressed against him and how good it felt to have Loki over him, kissing him like nothing else in the world mattered more. It became all he could do to hold onto Loki, rocking their hips and swollen cocks together. Tony didn't even realize he was coming until he was arching off the bed with Loki's weight holding him down, his moan swallowed by Loki as he came. Loki kissed him through it, his hips becoming more insistent until he came with a harsh snap between them, his whole body going still.

Tony reached for Loki's neck, hand sliding forward to cup his jaw and pulling his head up to look at him.

Loki slowly opened his eyes, finding Tony, who broke into a smile. He held Loki like that, probably looking like a love sick idiot, until Loki smiled back. Loki let out a breath, pushing himself up on shaky arms.

"Stay," Tony said, pulling him back down. He kissed Loki's cheek and tangled his fingers in his hair. He felt Loki smile against his skin before his lips returned to Tony's own. Tony didn't give a shit about the mess or anything except keeping Loki in that moment. He hooked his leg over Loki, running his hands down his back, trailing stripes in the beads of sweat there.

"I fucking love you," Tony mumbled, squeezing Loki's chest to his. Loki relaxed into him.

"You're pretty alright," Loki whispered back.

Tony pinched his ass in reply, enjoying the startled way Loki arched into him, then nipped his

bottom lip in retaliation. For a moment they laid there in silence, catching their breath.

“I don’t know what I did without you,” Loki said, pressing their foreheads together. Tony melted at the praise.

His eyes fell shut as he basked in it, running his fingers through Loki’s hair. “I don’t know what you did either,” Tony said because he couldn’t not be a smartass. “Must’ve been awfully boring.”

Loki laughed, and when Tony opened his eyes he found that Loki was watching him, smiling again. “You know,” Loki said. “I have been waiting for you to invite me to share the shower with you.”

“Really?” Tony asked, somewhat in disbelief at Loki’s roundabout invitation when it’d been a challenge to get the guy’s shirt off.

“Yes,” Loki said, rubbing the soft skin behind Tony’s ears.

“Yay!”

Loki chuckled like he wasn’t sure of what to make of Tony’s use of the word yay, and Tony wasn’t really sure either. He cupped Loki’s ass again because he could before saying, “Let’s go.”

Tony’s shower really wasn’t meant for two people, but they made it work, and Tony couldn’t have been happier about it.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I have a sort of atypical approach to smut sometimes and I want to thank everyone for supporting me in experimenting with it and my writing. I love hearing your thoughts/reactions. They've got their imperfections but they're figuring it out one step at a time.

Chapter 26

Tony had already gotten into the habit of going out to dinner with Rhodey or a few of the other guys from a work once or twice a week. It was casual and fun and beat the hell out of sitting at home by himself in his apartment. Tonight was not one of those nights, but Tony really wasn't in the mood to veg out alone in front of the TV. He knew it was a long shot, but he texted Loki.

You free to grab dinner tonight?

About five minutes later, Tony got the expected response. *I have to stay late for reports.* Tony frowned, but then another text came in. *Will you call me tonight before you go to bed?*

It was Loki's way of letting him know he wished he could be there. Tony brushed his thumb against the screen, chewing on his bottom lip.

He really didn't want to be alone tonight, and he really wanted to be with Loki. Maybe he'd just show up and surprise him. *You know I will.* ;) He didn't want to show up unexpectedly if Loki's family was there, though. *Who else are you stuck working late with?* He asked, hoping that he wasn't giving himself away.

Just me. Thor doesn't handle these reports. Tony could practically see the resigned expression on Loki's face. He made up his mind. He was going to grab some food for them and show up.

Hey, at least you've got the place to yourself.

True.

Tony started for the closest deli.

Tony didn't know what he'd expected to feel when he showed up at his old job, but he hadn't exactly expected to feel indifferent. It was just a building, now. Tony didn't feel nostalgic in the entryway. He especially didn't feel nostalgic as he panicked over not having a keycard to get in, but luck was on his side. Kamala was leaving and spotted him from inside the glass doors. She rushed over to push them open for him.

"It's nice to see you around here again! Is somebody's copier beyond hope?" She joked.

"Something like that," Tony grinned. "Thanks."

"Don't mention it," she said, waving goodbye as she hurried off to wherever it was that she was going. Tony was nervous as he got in the elevators, but when the doors chimed open on the top floor, Sif's desk was dark and the whole floor felt empty. Tony stepped out. He could hear the clicking of a keyboard in Loki's office.

Tony rounded the corner. Loki didn't glance up until the paper bag in Tony's arm rustled. Surprise lit up his face as he realized it was Tony standing there, and surprise lit up Tony's face when he spotted the obvious red rimming Loki's eyes. "Are you okay?" He blurted out.

Loki sat up straight, pushing his chair back from the keyboard. "What are you doing here?" He started to get up.

“I brought dinner,” Tony said, meeting him halfway. “I figured it’d be better than whatever you’re going to get out of the vending machine,” Tony said, tilting his head as he studied Loki in the fluorescent office lighting. He looked stressed. “You alright?” He asked again.

Loki brushed a few loose strands back from his face. “Just tired,” he said. “What did you bring?”

Tony drew the deli sandwiches out of the bag, handing the heavy, greasy wrapper to Loki. Loki sat back down, pushing reports out of the way and clearing a spot for them on the desk. Tony dragged one of the two chairs in front of Loki’s desk in closer. Loki paused, then got up and shut the door. Tony pulled their drinks out of the bag, debating how much he wanted to press the issue.

Because Loki didn’t just look tired. He looked horribly stressed and Tony wasn’t used to seeing that anymore. Loki hadn’t looked like this since, well, maybe the early days of their friendships or on a particularly bad day, but it wasn’t even that which was really nagging away at Tony. It was the red around his eyes. Tony was pretty damn sure he’d been crying. He couldn’t just say that outright, though. Tony took a noisy sip of his soda, frustrated.

“This was really thoughtful,” Loki said, voice unnaturally soft and gentle. “I didn’t expect you to come.”

“Yeah, well, I figured if it was just you up here, why not, you know? I don’t mind staying late for reports.”

Loki smiled to the side, staring down at the sandwich in his hands. “It’s like when I used to sit on the couch while you finished things up,” he said. Tony nodded, studying Loki again.

There was this pounding in his head, wondering why the fuck Loki had been in this state and not told him. And even worse, Loki was sitting here and having a regular conversation with Tony, and Tony was wondering if he’d have ever picked up on Loki’s distress if it weren’t for the tell tale sign around his eyes. Did Loki know? Probably not. “Has it been really busy?” Tony asked.

“No more than usual.”

Tony believed him. He wished he didn’t. “What’re the reports on?”

“Taxes, returns on investments, assessments of our mistakes in the past year,” Loki listed off with irritation. “I would’ve had them done before the end of the day, but I had to handle an incident on the sixth floor.”

Maybe that was the problem. “What was it?”

“Oh, one of the managers had filled out a report incorrectly and couldn’t fix it. It wasn’t a difficult fix, but it was time consuming. While I was down there I noticed two employees crouched over one computer screen. They were watching a standup comic when they should’ve been working with the rest of the department. It couldn’t have been the first time either. There were several gleeful looks thrown in their direction when they got caught.” Loki shook his head. “They were idiots for getting caught, but their manager should’ve been doing a better job, so then I had to handle that.” He glanced over at Tony. “How was your day?” He asked, lighter.

“Good,” Tony said. “I just worked on projects all day.” He hadn’t touched his sandwich at all. He grabbed it for a bite before it got conspicuous. Loki was eating like he hadn’t had lunch, and now that Tony thought about it, maybe he hadn’t.

Tony took a huge bite of his sandwich. The feeling just wouldn’t go away. He chewed, trying to get through the bite.

“There’s a new movie theater opening a couple blocks down from here,” Loki said. “It’s supposed to be really nice.” He brushed a crumb from his cheek. “They have reclined seating and a bar to order from.”

His voice sounded normal, his posture was relaxed, and yet Tony just knew he wasn’t okay. He swallowed hard, reaching for his drink. The carbonation burned down his throat. He was afraid that if he just pointed out Loki’s puffy eyes he’d hurt Loki’s pride. And Tony wasn’t exactly a fan of laying it all out when he was upset and he couldn’t blame the guy for covering it up because he knew he did too. But how was he supposed to ask?

Tony didn’t know.

“Do you mind working late?” Tony asked.

Some of the newly found light disappeared from Loki’s eyes again. “It’s fine,” he said, unscrewing the lid from his own drink and taking a sip.

“Thor never has to stay late,” Tony said.

“He does sometimes,” Loki said. “And he doesn’t handle as much as I do.”

Tony didn’t think that was a good thing like Loki seemed to. “Yeah, but it stresses you out.” Loki shrugged. He didn’t seem to care that it stressed him out. Tony’s brows furrowed in an angry line. “I’m just saying maybe it’s not good for you to have to do this all the time.”

“Tony, it will be no different when I run the company,” Loki said with a hell of a lot less patience. “Sometimes work just has to be done.”

“But you don’t even know if you’ll run the company.” It was blunt, and Tony kind of regretted it the moment it was out of his mouth, but he’d said it.

Loki’s eyebrows pinched down for a moment, like that didn’t compute, before he was calm again. “I’m the obvious choice,” he said. “I have greater responsibilities and have closed far more deals than he has.”

“Yeah, but do you even like that stuff?”

The look Loki gave him was dismissive. “Listen. Like, with my dad’s company, I could’ve taken it over and been CEO someday, but I always would’ve been working for him. Hell, he could’ve been a hundred years old and in a hospital bed and he’d still be calling me, telling me how to run things. He was never going to let it go. I didn’t want to live like that.” Loki had finished his sandwich already, and was studying Tony as he drank. It was hard to read what he was thinking. “And I’ve never missed that place,” Tony finished. “I thought maybe I would. But I don’t. Maybe you wouldn’t either.”

The back of Loki’s chair tipped with him as he leaned away, setting his hands together like a prayer. “It is a similar experience,” he said. “But it is not the same.” His gaze darted back over to Tony. “You don’t have to fuss over me, Tony. I’ve done this job for years.”

“But I don’t think you like it.”

Loki pressed his lips together in an unhappy line, and even though Tony could tell he was getting irked, Tony couldn’t stop fixating on the red around his eyes.

“There is nothing without its flaws,” Loki said. “I don’t have to enjoy writing reports to want this

job.”

“I’m just saying maybe you’ve never gotten the chance to think differently,” Tony said. “Like I always thought I had to take over my dad’s company, you know? But I don’t.”

Loki brushed his fingers along his bottom lip for a moment, thinking. “It is not up for debate,” he informed Tony.

He still looked fucking stressed though, didn’t Loki know that? And like, *everybody* in the company knew that Thor was the favorite. Tony didn’t want to see Loki get his heart broken. “What if you’re putting in all this work for a day that’s not going to come?” Tony asked.

Loki stared at him, and Tony felt like he’d crossed a line. Maybe he had. He held up his hands. “Okay, not up for debate. Fine.” He folded his arms against his chest and stared down at the floor, more upset than he expected. “I just hate seeing you like this.”

He glanced up to see confusion on Loki’s face.

“I can tell you were crying,” Tony said. Loki immediately glanced away, busted.

Tony didn’t know what else to say.

After a while Loki licked his lips. “I—find this job to be quite stressful at times—that is true.” That was obvious. “Earlier, I was just—frustrated. That’s all. My smoke breaks are not the same without you,” he admitted. He took a deep breath. “But I also realize it was not your job to allow me to vent all of my frustrations.”

Tony rolled his eyes. Now Loki was going to be all noble and act like he’d done something wrong by blowing off steam with him downstairs? Like Tony hadn’t bitched about things with him too. That’s how they’d become friends. “You can still call me and vent, you know,” Tony said. Maybe Loki wasn’t ready to quit this job yet, or maybe Tony was just seeing himself in Loki’s situation. Either way, Tony didn’t have a problem with Loki’s venting. “It’s better than you doing whatever it is you’ve been doing.”

Smoking fake cigarettes and acting like a badass freezing his ass off out in the cold, probably.

Loki paused. He smoothed his hair as his gaze dropped from Tony’s. “And you say that I’m the one that acts precious,” he said, almost mumbling.

Tony let out a dramatic sigh. “We became friends through mutual bitching,” Tony reminded him. Loki smiled in acknowledgement. “So, uh, how long are those reports going to take?”

The weight landed right back on Loki’s shoulders. “Two or three hours,” he said.

“Okay,” Tony said. “Then I’ve got two or three hours of shit to do on my laptop. I’ll just hang out with you tonight.” He reached down for his bag, fishing it out. “And I can do coffee runs in between.”

Loki was staring at him like he couldn’t quite believe it. “What?” Tony asked, setting his laptop on the desk.

“I am thinking I may have to write something for you soon.”

Tony grinned. “You’re welcome.”

He turned to his laptop screen then, but it was no surprise when Loki's hand brushed over his for a moment before his fingers returned to their own keyboard. They fell into silence, working, and the companionship eased the anger in Tony's chest, assuring him that Loki was fine.

When Tony got back to his own bed that night he crashed, falling asleep to fantasies of talking Loki out of his stupid job and telling Howard off.

Chapter 27

Tony had plans to go to a basketball game with Happy from the cybersecurity team in the evening, but he was still squeezing in a date with Loki. They'd settled in armchairs at a relaxed coffee shop. The late afternoon sun was glinting off the ceramic of their coffee mugs.

The shop was up on the second floor, and the massive windows overlooked the busy street below. Tony watched a man chase after his dog as it barked at something past a food cart. Loki cleared his throat. Tony glanced over.

"I have something for you," Loki said. He reached into his suit jacket. He was wearing a tie again, and Tony couldn't for the life of him tell if it was because Loki never dropped the formalwear even for something as casual as this, or if it was because he was indulging Tony's no longer secret kink.

Loki withdrew a sleek black flash drive from his jacket. A blue ribbon had been threaded through the hole in the corner and tied off. Tony accepted it, quirked an eye at the ribbon. "What's this for?" He asked, brushing his thumb over it.

"So it doesn't get mistaken for one of my other flash drives," Loki said. "That would be too easy a mistake to make." Tony turned it over. The company logo was emblazoned on the back in gold.

Tony stared at it in work mode for a few seconds, missing the obvious. "Wait," he said. Loki had leaned away in the armchair, one finger toying with the handle on his coffee mug. "Is this one of your stories?"

"It is remarkably difficult to write them when I know you'll be reading them," Loki admitted, abandoning the mug to brush his fingers against his cheek where a blush was starting to form. "I—tried to write what I knew you'd like."

Tony stared down at the flash drive in his hand. He couldn't believe that Loki had done that for him. It was so remarkable that Tony didn't know how to handle the emotion. "I am going to read this the moment I get home," Tony promised. He tried to leer and make it flirty, but he felt like it wasn't as good as he could normally pull off.

Loki smiled to himself, turning towards the window. His hair was up again. Loki had made Tony give back the hair tie he'd snagged last time because Loki had said he needed it get dressed, despite Tony's protests. Tony had sort of coveted having it on his wrist. He was waiting for another opportunity to steal one.

"It's shorter than the other ones you've read," Loki warned him.

"I'm going to be excited even if it's only five sentences," Tony told him. He'd known that Loki was writing it. Loki had run the idea by him to make sure it was okay and had even texted him with questions, but it was still a surprise to have it in his hand.

Tony hadn't really thought Loki would ever write anything for him when he first started asking for more. It'd just sort of been a way to make it okay to talk about the writing. Tony carefully tucked it into his pocket.

"I deleted it several times," Loki said. "But you asked and I said I would."

"I'm sure it'll be great," Tony said. He leaned in closer. "Any chance of it happening in real life?"

“Absolutely not,” Loki said.

That narrowed down the possibilities of what it was about then. For a while Tony had just been suggesting outlandish things to get a rise out of Loki. “Fine,” Tony said, shrugging. Loki nudged his foot.

“I sometimes wonder if I haven’t inadvertently inspired some things in you,” Loki said, contemplative suddenly.

Tony gave him a dull stare. “The answer is that you have. You definitely have,” he assured Loki.

Loki shook his head, turning his attention back towards the window like he wasn’t sure what to make of that. There was a little quirk on his lips though, and in Tony’s book on Loki that was as good as an outright smile.

Tony had a great time hanging out with Happy, but he’d be a liar if he said he hadn’t spent half of it thinking about the flash drive.

Tony made a beeline for his computer the second he got in the door.

He scratched the usb port as he rushed to shove it in, pulling his feet up onto his computer chair as he rapidly clicked the file.

You knocked on the doorframe of my office and sauntered in announcing, “Is the wifi up in here?” My hands hovered above the keyboard, stunned at your sudden appearance. You knew the rules.

Of course, before I could say anything, you were striding up to my desk and saying with one of your ever charming smiles, “Because I’m feeling the connection.”

Tony didn’t know if he wanted to burst into laughter or yell out of sheer reaction or call Loki and demand that he come over right now. Sure, the pickup line had been Tony’s suggestion for a work scene, but he hadn’t expected for the story to address him directly.

He brushed a hand against his face, unable to stop grinning like an idiot. It was ridiculous, but so Loki, and Tony was already on board with it.

“Shut the door,” I warned you, knowing perfectly well that Sif’s ears were perked for the slightest hint of intrigue. It would do us no favors to be discovered. “Lock it.”

You had no business looking so smug, and yet you did as you rounded my desk and perched on the corner, a stack of reports cushioning you like a throne.

I worked the knot out of my tie and drew it from my neck, your umber eyes greedily following its trail with yearning captivation. “Can I trust you to be silent?” I asked, knowing the answer well enough.

“Never,” you promised me, a smile curling up your soft lips.

“Very well,” I said, rising. The silken fabric bowed as it was given the privilege of resting upon your tongue, yielding to me as I guided it to its purpose, securing your silence.

The action could not cow you. Nothing ever could. Your mesmerizing eyes danced, ever wild, as I pushed you down against my desk, paying no heed to the array of folders and papers there. They

pillowed beneath you anyway, desperate to cradle you in their embrace.

“Whatever shall I do with you?” I wondered, marveling at your form spread out against my desk. A shrill ring interrupted my thoughts. “This is the problem with intruding during my working hours,” I reminded you, reaching for the phone. “I will have to take this.”

Tony’s nose almost touched the screen, he was leaning in so close to it. It was one thing to text scenarios and suggestions back and forth with Loki when he asked. It was another to read them, imagining Loki writing them. Before, Tony had imagined that Loki had sat there with bravado. Maybe with a martini glass and a cigarette. Now, knowing what he did, he wondered. Had Loki blushed pink, hiding his face with one hand as he pecked away at the keys?

The service representative chattered away in my ear as I thought to attend to the needs you so obviously possessed. I rested the phone against my ear, reaching for the buttons along your collared shirt. I pried each one open slowly, your skin blossoming pink at each caress. Your hands clasped the edge of the desk as I eased your slacks open, trailing my hand down your swollen length. “That’s hard,” I sympathized with the representative. “We will have to do something about it.” I grinned down at you.

I could only enjoy the pleasure of a single stroke before the voice in my ear requested information which I could only recite from my computer.

I sat down, one hand pleasuring itself along your arousal as the other reached for my keyboard.

Maybe it was just because his boyfriend had written it for him, but even with the flowery prose it was getting to him. Tony freed himself from his jeans, pretending that it was Loki’s hand on him.

I glanced back at you to find you reaching for your own release and swatted the offending hand away.

Tony almost laughed. It was like Loki could read him, even now. Fuck, he loved his boyfriend.

You panted against the desk, frustrated. As I read the numbers off to the representative I turned my attention back on you.

Your gorgeous eyes set upon me as I reached for you, stroking you in time, my gaze never leaving yours. Your knuckles blanched as they clung to the edges of the desk. A soft whimper escaped your lips that the tie failed to contain, try as it might.

Tony really fucking liked that Loki was so in charge in his writing. He’d been afraid that Loki would hold back when writing the new stuff. He was glad that Loki had taken his reassurance to heart.

I longed to trace my tongue along the weeping length of you, to taste the salt of your release, but I could only give instructions to the representative, my lips mourning their ill use.

Finally, the call was ending. “The pleasure is all mine,” I said as they thanked me, my gaze set on you. I hung up, thinking the moment had come when I could finally heed the call of my desires, but I felt you pulse in my hand. Your chest painted white, the envy of any impressionist.

You drew the gag from your mouth, cocking a grin at me as you sat up. “It’s your turn to stay quiet,” you said, drawing me into a kiss, and as ever, I found that I could refuse you nothing.

It ended there. Tony scrolled down, hoping for more. There was nothing. Tony had one hand clenched around his cock. It hadn’t been enough for him in real life.

Tony closed his eyes, dropping his head back. He took the scene further, digging his fingers into Loki's hair, tearing the shirt off of him. At first Tony entertained thoughts of Loki flipping him over and taking him against the desk, pounding into him as he was pinned helplessly against the papers, Loki's hands leaving bruises as they held him in place. Then it shifted, and Tony came to the image of himself sprawled across the desk, Loki standing over him, Loki's hand working himself furiously until he came across Tony's chest.

Tony blinked, his eyes readjusting to the dim light in the room. He could feel the burn on his cheeks. Tony took a deep breath. He grinned, not even really sure why, and found his gaze wandering towards the flash drive, its light softly winking back at him.

Tony stared at the flash drive.

He couldn't exactly give it back empty, now could he? That would just be rude.

And Tony already knew he didn't like writing. It was way harder than it looked.

But pictures...Tony could take pictures.

Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony had never been one of those guys who got antsy walking into a lingerie store. It was just a store, and it wasn't like he'd never seen a pair of panties before. Of course, he understood why the saleslady gave him a sympathetic look and came over the second she spotted him. She thought he was uncomfortable with what the store was. He was uncomfortable because he was picking something out for himself, but she didn't have to know that. She'd asked about his girlfriend and Tony hadn't had the nerve to correct her.

"What style does your girlfriend like?" The woman asked. She was in her mid thirties or early forties, and she had a motherly vibe about her that made Tony feel like he was being babied a little.

"Things that are elegant?" Tony scratched at his shirt collar. "She uh, wears business stuff most of the time, and I don't think she'd like something that was too bright. She's very—sleek?" He smiled, awkwardly. He wanted to make sure that he picked out something Loki would like and he knew their tastes were different.

The saleslady nodded, walking towards a display with a lot of black lace. "Maybe something like this?" She asked, holding up a hanger with a black bra and panty set.

Tony was not going to be able to pull that bra off. He didn't even need it. Something else caught his eye.

It was a sheer black robe with gold ribbon trimming the edges. Tony reached out to run his fingers along the fabric. It was incredibly soft. "This is like her style," Tony said. Hell, he'd definitely give it to Loki when he was done. "She'd love this," he said. "But I was going to get her a whole set."

The saleslady nodded, digging into the back of the rack. She pulled out another lace bra. "This would match," she said.

Tony frowned, contemplating. He could of just ordered something online but he'd wanted to make sure that he got it right, and this way he could tell that it was actually nice and not just in the stock photo. It was harder than he'd expected though.

"Maybe something with a little more—" Tony gestured at his chest, trying to think of the right way to phrase it.

The saleslady smiled. "Coverage?" She guessed. "That robe would also look nice with one of our corset sets." It wasn't exactly what he'd meant, but now that she'd mentioned a corset, he was intrigued.

She led him over to another display where she grabbed a strapless black lace corset with delicate gold embroidery along the top. "It comes with a matching thong," she said, holding the set up against the robe.

It was incredible. Tony could totally see it working for Loki. And maybe Tony'd look good in his colors? Or Loki would like it, at least. He hadn't planned on a corset, but damn, the idea was nice. When he glanced to the saleslady, she was smiling. "I think we have a winner," she said.

“Yeah,” Tony said, almost laughing at himself.

“Do you know what size she is?” The saleslady asked.

“Uh,” shit. “She’s about—my size?” Was that too obvious? He hoped it wasn’t obvious. “Like we’re pretty close in height. And I think—” He named the first size that popped in his head. “She’s an a cup?” That’s what he’d be, right?

To his surprise, the saleslady didn’t fuss or seem to think he was strange. She picked out a different sized corset and handed it along with the robe to Tony. “Is there anything else I can help you find?”

“I think I’m good,” Tony said. At a glance, what she’d picked did seem like it would fit him. He figured that even if it wasn’t perfect, it wasn’t like that was the part Loki would be paying attention to.

“Great. I’ll ring you out.” She started walking towards the sales counter. “How long have you been with your girlfriend?”

“A few months,” Tony said. “But we knew each other for over a year before we started dating and we became really good friends.” The saleslady smiled encouragingly at him as she started scanning the tags. “We actually worked at the same company, but then I got a new job and it’s really nice because now we can date without it being a problem.” It was so much easier to talk about this. “She’s in the running for CEO,” Tony said, pride slipping into his voice. “She has the best sales in the whole company.”

“That’s wonderful. What do you do now?” The saleslady asked as she wrapped the lingerie in tissue paper.

“Computer programming.”

The saleslady placed everything inside of a slender box with the company logo on the top. “I’m sure that she’ll love this.” The saleslady gave him another smile that felt motherly.

Tony dug into his pocket for his card. “Thanks for your help today,” he said as he wrote his signature.

“No problem. You just bring it back if it’s not the right size, alright? We can exchange it out.”

Tony nodded. She placed the box into a bag, which crinkled as Tony took it. He walked out to his car with a skip in his step and another little nervous twitch in his heartbeat.

Tony had taken more than his fair share of nudes in his lifetime, but he’d never bothered to make them artsy. He’d never bothered to buy lingerie for them either. But the ones in Loki’s files all had good lighting and something classy about them, so Tony would just have to figure it out.

His bedroom seemed like the best choice to take them in. Of course that meant he had to clean it and y’know, make the bed first.

He decided to go with just the lighting from his window. It was late enough in the afternoon that slats of light were falling across the bed in long lines from the blinds. That was kind of artsy, right?

Actually, now that Tony thought about it, this was what his bedroom had looked like with Loki in

his bed last time. He let out a wistful sigh.

It was time to put on the lingerie.

For a moment Tony wished that he'd bought red, but he brushed that thought away as he stripped, imagining that this set had come from Loki's own collection. Tony slid the thong up his thighs. The lace triangle couldn't even hope to cover him in the front. Especially since his cock was already stirring to life. Tony bit his lip, tying a loop in the waistband in the back so that it was a better fit on his narrow hips.

The corset felt ridiculous as he tugged it on. His nipples peaked out above it, and there was a gap beneath them where it hung open slightly, no matter how much he tried to adjust the back. It still pinched tight above his waist too. Tony turned to look back in his mirror, stunned when he caught sight of himself.

Okay, Loki was going to like this. He was.

Tony smiled, glancing away from the mirror. He looked downright sinful.

With renewed confidence, Tony drew the robe from the bag and put it on, tying the belt into a bow. Then he set up his camera and tucked its remote into the palm of his hand.

Tony settled down on the edge of the bed. He decided to go for some relatively tame poses first, sitting and then sprawling out on the bed with the robe on. Tony pulled the belt free in a series of shots. As he caught another glimpse of himself in the mirror, a heavy sense of satisfaction spread through him.

He looked gorgeous and he knew it.

Tony let the robe slip down his shoulders and pool at his elbows. He leaned forward, setting his chin in the palm of his hand as he sat, grinning at the camera. His hair was tousled to the side. It looked like his best post-sex hair did. Loki needed to see what he was missing out on in the back too. Tony turned around, tilting his hips, the narrow band of the thong slipping tighter between his cheeks. He looked back over his shoulder as he took the shot, an honest grin on his face as he thought about how Loki would react.

After he'd gotten so much from Loki's stories, it was sort of nice to be giving something back. It was powerful, too. Tony could easily imagine Loki coveting them. In fact, Tony was pretty damn sure that Loki would be spending a lot of time with them.

That was also sort of why Tony'd run out to the store as soon as he could after getting the idea. He was impatient. He couldn't wait even two shipping days to share this with Loki.

Tony dropped the robe onto the bed. He debated abandoning the corset. On one hand, he didn't mind giving total nudes to Loki. He'd given them to people he'd cared about far less. He enjoyed taking them. On the other hand, Loki's recent story had centered on Tony but left him wanting. Tony wanted to tease too. It was more fun that way.

He decided to abandon the corset but pose so that his cock was never quite on display. The corset left pink lines behind as he peeled it back from his skin. Tony traced one of the geometric lines across his stomach. Well, whatever.

Tony gave the camera a smug look as he grabbed the robe back just enough to cover his cock and little else.

Loki was going to eat his heart out.

Tony scrolled back through the shots, deleting the ones that hadn't turned out the way he'd imagined them in his head. He had to commend himself. These were hands down the best sexy photos he'd ever taken.

Tony hadn't had the patience to wait to take the photos, and he sure as hell didn't have the patience to wait to give them until their next official date. He wanted Loki's reaction now, which was exactly how he found himself outside of Loki's apartment door an hour and a half later.

Tony knocked on the door in an obnoxious pattern, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Loki was grinning as he pulled the door open. "This must be some gift," he said with amusement. He had to have seen Tony's excited fidgeting through the peephole.

"It is," Tony promised, stepping inside. He shrugged off his coat, hanging it up on the coat rack as Loki watched him with open curiosity. He was wearing a slim fit white oxford shirt that wrinkled as he crossed his arms. The dress slacks didn't really come as a surprise. He was wearing gray slippers with a knitted pattern though. They were the only indicator that he was relaxing at home. "I need your computer."

"Why?" Loki asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Correction. *You* need your computer," Tony said, setting his hands on Loki's shoulders to push him in the direction of the kitchen. "Come on."

Loki laughed, giving in and taking a step in the direction that Tony was pushing him. It turned out that Loki's laptop was on his coffee table. He sat down on the massive black leather couch, Tony right at his side. "What am I supposed to be doing?" Loki asked as he opened his laptop.

Tony dug the flash drive out of his pocket. Surprise flickered across Loki's expression as he recognized it.

"Did you write a story?" He asked, clearly skeptical.

"Even better," Tony said.

Loki plugged it in with another quizzical glance in Tony's direction. A single folder appeared.

Loki's Favorite Folder of All Time

Loki hummed. "That's quite a title to live up to," he commented.

"Just open it already," Tony said.

He held his breath as the thumbnails all appeared at once, offering glimpses into his bedroom shoot. Loki froze. Then, impossibly fast, he clicked the first one so hard that it opened twice. Tony still felt like it happened in slow motion.

Loki's mouth dropped open. Tony had never seen him so speechless. Heat prickled across his skin.

Loki didn't seem to know what to do with himself.

He was almost in disbelief as he clicked the next one open. “Tony,” he said, arousal breaking his voice.

He started to scroll down through the thumbnails, glued to the screen.

“Do you like it?” Tony asked, knowing damn well the answer.

Loki glanced at him, and Tony had a split second to process how dark his pupils had become because suddenly there was a hand tugging at his shirt collar and impatient lips at his, drawing the air out of his lungs.

Tony’s head spun. It was one thing for Loki to say he liked it. It was another thing entirely to feel it.

“That’s a yes,” Tony declared when he was allowed to breathe.

Loki gave him a devilish grin. “I don’t know whether I want to go through the rest or have you right now and save them for later.”

“Do I get a say?” Tony breathed out.

“Of course.”

“Now,” Tony said, leaning back in. “Definitely now.” He sucked at Loki’s bottom lip, a moan greeting him. Loki crawled into his lap, his boldness new and exciting.

“Please tell me you’re wearing that under your shirt,” Loki breathed out beside his ear.

“That—would have been a good idea, wouldn’t it?” Tony asked, mentally kicking himself. He’d showered and thrown on his outfit as normal. The lingerie was lying forgotten on his dresser.

Loki pushed him down flat against the couch, crawling over him. “Tony,” he practically cooed, lips trailing down his jaw. “Tony, Tony, Tony.” Tony’s eyes fluttered shut as Loki’s tongue laved at the pulse in his neck. “You shall have to promise me to wear them later.”

“I promise!” Tony hadn’t meant to breath it out with such enthusiasm. He wrapped his arms around Loki’s shoulders, trying to hide his embarrassment. “I will, I will. I was going to give you the robe.”

Loki’s warm breath drifted against his neck. “Won’t you wear it?” He asked. It almost sounded like a pout. Almost.

“Yeah,” Tony said, rolling his hips because he couldn’t handle the anticipation. “But I thought it’d look good on you.”

“Maybe I’ll keep it for you and have it be all that you wear when you are here,” Loki muttered before sucking at the soft spot under his jaw.

Tony stared at him in shock, all the blood that could’ve been helping his brain out rushing straight to his cock. Loki glanced back at him, a smug smile drawing across his lips when he caught sight of Tony. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“That and you talking like this all the time,” Tony said when his brain got back online.

Loki chuckled before his tongue circled the soft shell of Tony’s ear, nipping at the top. Tony writhed against him, groaning. He tugged at Loki’s collar, managing to free one button before Loki

sat up. "Let's move to my bedroom."

Tony tried to sit up but it was too hard in the position Loki had him in. Loki was grinning down at him, far more pleased than Tony probably even understood. Tony seized the opportunity to unbutton more of Loki's shirt. Loki tensed as Tony did, but then he smiled, kneading his fingers into Tony's shoulders.

"Come on," Loki said, letting him up.

Tony didn't have to be told twice.

He tugged off his shirt as he followed Loki, dropping it on the bedroom floor and starting to kick off his jeans. Loki was more impatient than Tony'd ever seen him as he unbuttoned the rest of his shirt, but Loki still managed to appear elegant as he removed and hung each piece of clothing over the back of a chair.

Tony sank down onto the bed as he waited, appreciating the show. He reached for Loki's hand and pulled him in the moment he was done.

Tony was never going to get over the feeling of skin on skin when it came to Loki. Or the way he kissed Tony, Tony's hands grasping at sharp shoulder blades and drawing down the gentle curve of his spine.

"I don't even know what to do with you," Loki murmured beside his ear, his hand squeezing Tony's shoulder as his thumb ran under his collarbone. "Tony," he muttered, pressing a kiss to his cheekbone. "My wonderful Tony."

Really, Tony was getting kind of light headed with the attention.

He wrapped his legs around Loki's waist, pulling him in tighter. The bedsheets beneath him were impossibly hot. Loki's lips were trailing down his neck again and it was all Tony could do to set his hand on the back of Loki's neck, Loki's pulse jumping beneath his fingertips. "I have," he said. "Some ideas."

Loki shifted, his chest rubbing against Tony's as he did in a slow side that completely grasped Tony's attention. The room was sweltering hot, wasn't it? "And what would those brilliant ideas be?"

Tony grinned back, but it was lazy and inarticulate. The desire burning in him was making it hard to think of anything but release.

"Hmm?" Loki prompted, rolling his hips. Tony's mind fell back on the scene with the desk in Loki's office. "Tell me, Tony," Loki teased, grinding against him in the most agonizing way. He claimed Tony's mouth again, his breaths shorter.

Loki was just everywhere, and it was all that Tony had wanted. He lost himself in the sensation and found himself floating down from the high of an orgasm.

"Damn it," Tony breathed out.

To his utter surprise, Loki laughed, delighted.

The look on Tony's face couldn't have been great because Loki immediately reassured him. "I'm taking it as a compliment," he said proudly.

Tony blinked. In the back of his mind, he was starting to think that Loki loved being one hell of a tease and he had no idea what he was getting himself into. The look in Loki's eyes was downright adoring though, so Tony didn't linger on it.

He was suddenly conscious of the cooling sweat on his thighs and how he'd tensed them. He let his legs slide down to the bed, all too aware of Loki's hard cock between them.

"Hey," Tony said. Somehow, he felt more open than usual. "You know what I thought about as the ending to your last story?" Loki's eyebrows pinched down, a little more alert. "If I watched as you got yourself off and came across my chest."

"Seriously?" Loki breathed out.

Tony smiled at him, hopeful.

"...Are you asking me?" Loki stared at him, wide eyed. Tony gave him a shy little smile, unsure of whether or not that was too much.

It was sort of easy to get lost with where the line between fantasy and reality began sometimes.

Loki ran his fingers through his hair, grabbing hold of his bun. Tony rubbed small circles against his back. "It's too much right now—" Tony started.

"—It's just that I've never—" Loki licked his lips. He turned to the side, tucking loose strands behind his ear. His hand returned to his bun and the bend of his elbow went motionless as he lost himself in thought, giving Tony the chance to admire the long lines of his slender torso. Then, a look of determination that was long familiar to Tony appeared on Loki's face. "Okay," he said.

"You don't have to—" Loki pressed a finger to Tony's lips.

"I want to."

Loki was fucking gorgeous with that flash of confidence. Tony grinned. He licked Loki's finger, amused at the way Loki prickled then flushed, his hips snapping forward a fraction. "Let's see it then," Tony said.

Loki settled between Tony's legs, kneeling. Uncertainty flitted back through his expression. "You know," Tony said, brushing his fingertips over Loki's knees, "you're going to have to memorize the way I look because I don't have my camera."

Loki stared at him for a moment. "What makes you think I haven't already?"

Tony's head rolled to the side on the pillow as he huffed. "Charmer," he muttered.

He heard the soft whisper of friction and glanced up to find that Loki had taken his long cock in hand, tracing a vein on top. His eyes fell shut and his chin tipped back a little. A thick bead of precise was caught on Loki's thumb, its slick catching the light as it slid along the flushed skin.

He seemed a little tense, and shy maybe, but his hand didn't pause.

"Are you thinking about my photos?"

Loki broke into a smile, eyes snapping open. "Maybe," he said. "Or maybe I'm thinking of something you haven't read."

"That's just mean," Tony said, trying not to laugh and encourage him. Loki grinned down at him

though and Tony sank into the bed, utterly content. It was heavenly to be laying in the sheets like this with nothing to do but enjoy the view.

Loki's cheeks had flushed and so had his chest, trailing down past peaked pink nipples and ending across his stomach. It made him look way more debauched than he probably would've otherwise. There was a spot on his neck where Tony had paid too much attention. Tony felt a little proud of that, truthfully.

"You know my photos had an after credits too," Tony said. "In my shower. I thought about having it on camera, but you're going to have to work for that."

"I bet," Loki muttered, half-listening.

"Maybe if you're really good, I'll make a video for your birthday or something."

Loki blinked, his attention falling back on Tony. He didn't have a quip for Tony this time. He stroked himself, one hand cupping his balls.

Loki's eyelids slowly drifted down again as his grip on his cock tightened, but his gaze didn't leave Tony. It was intimate and raw in a way that Tony'd never experienced before.

It was like a wall was crumbling down between them a little bit more each time they were together.

Heat pooled in Tony, his exhausted cock attempting to stir. Tony let out a deep sigh. He traced tiny circles on Loki's knees.

"Tony," Loki said, his voice breaking with Tony's name and making it hard to figure out whether it was a warning or a plea.

Tony drew his legs in close against Loki, enjoying the warmth. Loki's breath stuttered. "You're fucking gorgeous, Lo."

His hazy eyes opened a little more, hand slowing. "You make me wish I were recording this," Tony admitted. Loki's eyes squeezed shut for a second, his lips falling open, before he forced them open to set on Tony again. "I'd watch it all the time."

Loki's hand faltered and his body went stock still, a stripe of hot come splattering across Tony's skin. As Loki's hand slipped from himself Tony sat up, cradling the back of Loki's head as he pulled him into a kiss, Loki still breathless and limp. "Fuck I love you," Tony mumbled, stealing another kiss.

Loki seemed lighter as he stared back at Tony. So much lighter, actually. He was still trying to catch his breath as he stared at Tony, the affection in his expression making Tony's stomach flutter.

"That was the best gift I've ever been given," Loki said.

"Would you say it was your *favorite* file ever?" Tony asked with a shit eating grin.

Loki turned away, hiding his amusement. "Definitely in my top five." He ran both of his hands over his hair. "I would certainly like to see you in lingerie again."

"Next time I'll let you pick it out," Tony promised.

A pleasant sound fell from Loki's lips. "You're spoiling me."

“Then I’m going to spoil you rotten.”

When Loki drew in for another kiss, Tony reached for his hips, mind already buzzing with ideas for next time as he held Loki close.

Chapter End Notes

Hey friends, I see this story either going the fun and sexy route or the dark angsty drama route, and I’m picking the first. I’d really just like to have fun writing them enjoying themselves so it’s probably not going to be all that plotty from here on out aside from some lighter things. If you’re looking to peace out at a more or less rounded narrative I’d recommend considering this done at chapter 24. Everybody else, buckle up. I’m flooring it down the smut ’n fluff route.

(and maybe someday I’ll consider doing an off shoot writing that drama route instead)

The rating is pretty much shifting to E as well, even if every chapter won't qualify.

Can’t wait to hear your reactions to this chapter! :)

Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

Just a small scene for this chapter. :)

It was going to happen eventually.

Tony talked Loki's ear off about Rhodey all the time, and Rhodey had taken to making fun of Tony whenever he caught Tony making smitten faces at text messages from Loki.

So they were going to meet, eventually. And it might as well be when Rhodey needed an extra pair of hands to help with moving, right? The move was only a couple of blocks down the street to a bigger, nicer apartment.

Tony held his breath as he knocked on the door of Rhodey's apartment. He wasn't sure who he was more nervous about meeting who. He wanted them to like each other because he liked both of them so much.

Loki was standing beside him. He was wearing a crisp white oxford shirt and a gray vest with gray slacks. His hair was tied back. When Tony'd invited Loki to help, Loki had simply told him he'd be "delighted". Tony bit his lip as he went to knock again. Loki had denied being jealous, but Tony didn't believe him.

The door swung open. A woman Tony had never seen before stared up at him with a bright smile on her face. "You must be Tony," she said, letting them in. "I've heard a lot about you." It was obviously a compliment. "And Loki, his boyfriend, right?"

Loki stepped forward. "It's a pleasure to meet you," he said, extending his hand. Such a grown up.

"Glenda," she said, giving him a firm handshake back. "Rhodey and I grew up together. He's in the back boxing up some stuff." Then, raising her voice she said so he'd hear, "Because he takes forever."

The screech of packing tape was the only reply.

"We're loading up my minivan right now," she said. "If you want to grab a box, I'll show you where it's at." A door creaked open. Rhodey walked out, carrying an oversized box. He immediately set it down.

"Tony!" He broke into a shit eating grin as he caught sight of Loki. Rhodey's eyes darted back to Tony. "Is this him?"

"I see you've been talking about me," Loki said with some amusement.

Rhodey immediately latched onto it. "Talking about you is an understatement," he said. "Did you know that he has a picture of you two framed on his desk?"

"Tony," Loki exclaimed, turning to him.

Tony opened and closed his mouth. Nothing genius was coming out, and Loki was turning to Rhodey with a sly grin on his face. “I feel as though I could write a biography on you myself, James,” Loki said, extending his hand.

Something was clicking into place in Tony’s head, buffering.

Rhodey shook his hand back with gusto. “It’s an honor to finally meet the perfect boyfriend of Tony Stank.”

“Stank?” Loki asked.

“He didn’t tell you about the mail guy? We corrected him the first couple of times, but now it’s just Tony’s—”

“—Alright you two,” Tony interrupted, coming back online. Shit. Fuck. Tony’d been prepared for jealousy, not friendship. “I think we’ve got some boxes to load up.”

“Now you want to work?” Rhodey teased. Tony set his lips together. He wasn’t pouting. Definitely not. And Loki hadn’t just cracked up.

Loki’s hand set on arm, comforting him about the gentle teasing. “I suppose we can fit a few boxes into my car as well,” he said.

The afternoon passed quickly. Tony really liked Glenda. She was funny and confident and most importantly, didn’t share the secret amused glances that Tony caught Rhodey and Loki trading once or twice.

When the last box was moved, they ordered pizza at Rhodey’s new apartment. Loki sat on the couch next to Rhodey. There was about a foot of space between them. Tony eyed it. He made up his mind.

“Tony,” Loki said, voice bright with an unvoiced laugh. Tony wedged himself in-between Loki and Rhodey, crossing his arms.

“What?” Tony asked obtusely.

“I think he’s pointing out that you had a whole armchair you could’ve taken,” Glenda said.

“I like this spot,” Tony declared.

Loki’s arm came around his shoulder. If Tony could’ve purred in contentment, he would have. “You said something earlier about boardgames, didn’t you Glenda?” Loki asked.

“A card game,” Glenda said. “There’s a deck of cards in here,” she said, prying open the cardboard box next to her.

“We can’t play poker. Loki cheats,” Tony said.

“I do not,” Loki insisted.

Just then the doorbell rang. Rhodey got up to get it, leaving Tony to sink into the empty space he left on the couch. Rhodey came back with two boxes of pizza. “Let’s eat before we decide who cheats the most at card games,” he said.

By the end of the night, it was pretty well even. They were all cheating, and no one was winning.

But the day had gone way better than Tony'd hoped for, and he was counting that as a win.

Chapter 30

When Tony called Loki to ask him to go out on Friday night, it'd been an hour past the time Loki was supposed to be off work. It hadn't exactly been surprising to find out that Loki was still there. Tony lured him away with promises of carry out on the couch at his place.

"I thought you'd be out with Rhodey and the guys," Loki said later as he poked his chopsticks down into a carryout container. "Yesterday you said everybody was going out after work." Tony watched the slender noodles slide in past his lips for a moment before answering.

"That fell through," Tony said. "Rhodey's got a blind date tonight, so..." He shrugged.

Loki licked his lips, a drop of sauce vanishing from them. "We should invite him and Glenda over to watch Star Trek with us sometime," Loki said.

Tony poked his fork at his orange chicken. "Maybe."

"Tony," Loki said, voice warm and bright suddenly. "You're not jealous, are you?"

Tony's head whipped to the side as his mouth dropped open. He immediately shut it, looking away. "Of what?" He shoved a hunk of orange chicken in. It burnt the roof of his mouth as he chewed.

"Rhodey," Loki said with some glee. "How well we get along?"

Tony reached for his soda. He gulped the cold liquid down. "No," he said, trying not to scowl. "And don't act like I didn't notice that little possessive streak with your arm around my shoulder."

"Don't act like I didn't notice how utterly pleased you were by it," Loki said without missing a beat. Busted. Tony scowled for real this time. "It's endearing," Loki reassured him. He grabbed his drink. "And Rhodey seemed to find it amusing. I hope he hits it off with whoever he's seeing tonight."

Loki really liked Rhodey. It was kind of nice. Well, aside from the two of them giving Tony a hard time and teasing him. "Me too," Tony said. He speared his fork into a bright green chunk of broccoli. "I was thinking tomorrow we could go see a movie if it's still freezing out."

He glanced over just in time to see Loki's eyes falling shut like he was nodding off. The moment his attention was back on Tony though, all signs of tiredness were gone. "That may be a good idea. They're calling for snow again in the afternoon." He took a long sip of his drink. "I am ready for the spring to finally come and stay."

"Yeah." Tony dug down to the bottom of his takeout container. "We should go to an outdoor concert or something when it does."

"I'd like that."

Tony smiled at him and the conversation dwindled as they went back to watching their episode. When Tony caught Loki yawning and starting to fall asleep, he patiently suggested that they go to bed.

Loki insisted that he was fine the first time, but the second time Tony caught him he gave in.

Tony was in his pajamas and sitting on the bed when Loki came in from the bathroom wearing his own. Loki flipped the bedroom switch, plunging the room into darkness. The streetlamp light fell onto the bed from the window. As Loki crawled in, the mattress dipped with his weight.

Tony knew that Loki was tired, so he hadn't exactly been expecting it when Loki crawled into his lap. "Is this dessert?" Tony asked.

Loki sighed. "How many times are you going to use that line?" He muttered, his cold fingers sliding up the back of Tony's neck before resting at the base of his skull. Loki's lips were gentle at the corner of his mouth, slowly coaxing their way along Tony's open lips. Tony tried to deepen the kiss as Loki cradled his head.

But Loki was straddling his lap, almost pinning him in place as he took his time. Tony sank into the affection Loki was showering him with. Loki made him feel utterly wanted, and the result was that Tony just wanted more. He wanted Loki to take all of him, and he wanted to take all of Loki. The sensation was maddening.

Tony grabbed Loki's hips, slipping his fingers in past the waist band. Finally, Loki's tongue greeted his as a moan escaped him. He rose from Tony's lap just enough to allow Tony to draw the silk pajama pants from him. Heat rushed through Tony as he realized that Loki hadn't been wearing anything underneath them. He cupped an appreciative handful of Loki's ass, Loki's fingernails digging into his scalp as he stayed set on controlling the kiss, sucking at Tony's bottom lip.

"You know," Tony breathed out. "I have that lingerie in here."

"The thought has crossed my mind," Loki muttered back.

It wasn't that Tony wanted to wear it now. Maybe he just wanted to remind Loki of it. He dropped back towards the bed, pulling Loki down with him. Instantly, Loki adjusted, hands clasping Tony's shoulders as his tongue explored Tony's mouth. Tony didn't even know why he'd bothered to get dressed. He tugged insistently at Loki's shirt.

For a moment Loki ignored him, but then the weight was gone as Loki rolled off of him. Loki sat up in the cold light of the street lamps, only discernible by the pale skin that peeked out of the black silk.

Tony didn't wait for a command. He wriggled out of his own clothes, tossing them on the floor. When he was done, Loki was already naked, watching him.

Loki said nothing, crawling back over Tony and pulling one of the blankets up and over them. Tony moaned in sheer anticipation. Loki's hands were back at his shoulders, Loki's lips trailing down his neck. Tony was free to caress Loki's bare skin as the blanket trapped their heat. Tony grabbed one of Loki's ass cheeks and gave it a squeeze, grinning when Loki's hips arched into it. Loki's tongue slid down Tony's neck, his pulse jumping.

Tony brought his finger to his lips and sucked on it. He slipped it back under the blanket, prying Loki's cheeks apart with one hand before slipping the slicked finger between in an appreciative swirl around the tightly whorled skin, heat radiating from it.

A strangled moan was muffled against Tony's neck. He nudged at the entrance, head spinning with lust and desire. He loved Loki. He wanted him.

Loki leaned up, the pressure of his hands on Tony's shoulders and the sudden absence of his

attentive lips jarring. “I have lube,” Tony said into the dark, not entirely able to make out Loki’s expression. He hadn’t planned on doing anything without it really.

“That’s not the problem.” Loki’s voice was husky, but sharp too. Tony’s stomach did a nervous flip. Had he done something wrong?

“I can bottom, I figured I would—” Loki sat up, a hiss of a sigh assaulting Tony’s ears as Tony’s hands fell to the mattress. The blanket draped around Loki’s shoulders like a cape.

It was as if Loki had thrown a bucket of ice water on him. Tony’s heart beat uncomfortably fast as his body refused to move.

Suddenly, Loki’s fingers were brushing through his hair. Tony blinked at the touch, bewildered and oddly comforted at the same time. “On another night, Tony,” Loki promised, his voice soft and kind. Tony wondered if Loki could tell that he was freaked out or not. “Let’s just enjoy ourselves as we have before tonight.”

Tony blinked, trying to adjust his eyes in the darkness. There were shadows across Loki’s face, and the streetlamp wasn’t as bright as it had been. Maybe it was snowing again.

Loki bent down to kiss him, and this time Tony’s lips didn’t respond. His mind was racing for an explanation. He’d been with Loki for a while now, so why not this? Was there something wrong with him? Loki’s lips broke away.

“Why not?” Tony asked, hating the way his voice sounded so insecure.

Loki sat back up. Tony could make out Loki’s arms moving, brushing his hair back from his face. He shuffled off of Tony, then laid down beside him on the bed, a good foot of room between them.

Tony was used to the sting of rejection. It happened sometimes at places when he was picking people up. Not everybody was into him, whatever. That wasn’t a problem. But this was different. This hurt a hell of a lot more.

“Do you remember when you told me you didn’t expect for me to go from zero to sixty?” Loki asked, his voice sounding so rational, so utterly at odds with Tony’s own mental state. “This is one of those times.” There was a whisper of something unyielding in his voice, but it was so fucking gentle too, and Tony had no clue how to handle that. It’d be so much easier if he’d just yell or insult Tony or something.

Tony stared up in the darkness where the ceiling would be, the blanket fisted in his hand.

He didn’t know what to say.

“Normally you’re—” Loki’s voice drifted off. Tony took a deep breath. “You’re fine with us being wired differently,” Loki said, his voice hardly above a whisper. “Why is tonight different?”

Tony made a sound in the back of his throat. He shifted in the bed, erection gone entirely. At least that made it easier to think. “I didn’t mean to upset you,” Tony said.

“I’m not upset.”

Fuck. Loki wasn’t upset.

Loki was laying on his side, his head propped up with his elbow as he watched Tony, allowing him his space.

“I don’t know,” Tony said. He didn’t know what was bringing this up in him. The quiet made it easier to think though. So did knowing that Loki was laying there, waiting but not pushing. “I’m confused,” Tony tried. He was a genius, but it happened, alright? People were confusing, even for a genius. “We do all this other stuff and I guess it—” Why was Tony telling him all of this? Weren’t Stark men supposed to be made of iron and all that?

“And it,” Loki prompted.

Tony swallowed. He’d come this far. Might as well say it. “It makes me think you don’t want me or something. I mean you do it in your stories but—”

Loki hissed. “Those stories.” The mattress jostled as Loki shifted irritably. “At times I am grateful they got us together, and at other times I hate them. I’m going to spend my entire life wondering how we would be were they not in our heads.”

“It’s not them,” Tony said, soothed as his analytical thinking took over. “I was just making the point that you don’t seem to have a problem with us having anal sex in them.” As suddenly as he’d been upset by rejection, he was over it again. He knew Loki was wired differently, he did. He didn’t know why it’d bothered him so much in that moment. All the conversations they’d had before came back as data that he knew meant Loki wanted him. Hell, Loki loved him. He knew that.

Loki was quiet for a long moment. “Those scenes were not particularly realistic,” Loki said, enunciating the last word carefully.

Pieces started to click together. “You’re worried about it,” Tony said, half statement, half question.

Tony could just begin to make Loki out in the dim light. Loki didn’t correct him.

Tony felt so much lighter. This he could handle. “We can take it slow,” Tony said. “It won’t be as bad as you think. Everyone gets nervous. My first time I was nervous and we just went really slow, and I’ll tell you if it hurts, alright? I know people say it hurts, but it doesn’t have to.”

Loki rolled onto his back, staring upward.

“I’m not nervous about that.”

“Okay. What part are you worried about?” Tony wasn’t squeamish about figuring things out. He’d find a way to make Loki comfortable. “We can make it work.” Tony could figure out how to make anything work.

“And if I don’t enjoy it?”

“Are you kidding? You are going to love owning my ass,” Tony said, almost laughing. When Loki didn’t respond, he thought that maybe he’d said the wrong thing. “You won’t know until you try,” Tony said.

“That’s not empirically true,” Loki said, a tad bit snippy.

“Okay, well—” Tony couldn’t exactly argue with that. “Do you want to try?” He asked, drawing circles with his fingertips against the sheets.

Loki breathed in loudly enough for Tony to notice. “Yes,” he said. “Though I haven’t particularly —” Loki let out a huffy breath. “Enjoyed it with myself.”

Tony tried not to get distracted by that mental image.

“Doing it with someone is different,” Tony said. “And anyway, maybe you’ll like it for different reasons. I know some guys that like it for the adrenaline and some that like it for the closeness. They don’t care for the act as much.”

Loki rolled back onto his side, facing Tony.

“At the very least you’ll have new writing inspiration,” Tony teased.

“I don’t know how wise it is for me to keep writing them,” Loki said. His voice was pensive enough that Tony believed him.

“Don’t stop writing, Loki,” Tony said. “I love reading them.”

“Would you be this patient with me if you hadn’t read them and been inspired?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. He was kind of offended. “I’m not an asshole, thanks.”

“Most of the time,” Loki corrected him. Tony found himself smiling at the teasing. Loki reached across the bed, setting his hand on Tony’s side. He brushed his thumb back and forth a couple of times before his hand retreated. “I wish we were wired the same way,” he said, voice back to that somberness from before.

Tony had to think for a moment. “Yeah, but I, uh—I’ve been with a lot of people, and I wasn’t wired the same as any of them,” Tony told him. “I don’t know if anybody is.” Loki drew his knees up, but stopped just short of touching Tony’s legs. “Maybe some people are close, but you know—” Tony sighed. Loki didn’t know. “You just have to work it out so that both parties are happy.”

“Are you happy?”

Tony short circuited for a moment before he made an odd sound. “Way to pull your punches there, Lo.”

“Well, I—” Loki started, about to spill some perfectly sound rebuttal, Tony was sure.

“—Yes,” Tony said. He ran his fingers through Loki’s hair. “This is different than any relationship I’ve had before. And I think we talked about this, but you’re my first serious long term relationship. And I’m your first sexual relationship with a guy I guess, so you know. We’re both kind of new.” Tony paused, thinking. “It’s kind of nice, actually.”

Loki’s hand found his wrist, wrapping securely around it and massaging a small circle against his pulse. “I’m happy too.” Tony relaxed. He hadn’t realized he’d wanted Loki to answer the question too until he heard it. “I often wonder if I am boring or disappointing you, but then I remember what you said about it feeling forced and trying to prove a point. I don’t want to force myself with you.”

It touched Tony that Loki had taken his words to heart.

“I don’t want you to be disappointed,” Loki continued. “But I may not be capable of some of the scenarios I’ve teased you with.”

“I, um, I’m okay with that.” Tony moved his legs so that they were touching Loki’s. “I wanted to be with you before I found your writing. It’s not why I want to be with you, Loki.”

Loki let out what sounded like a sigh of relief.

“Did you think that?” Tony asked.

“No,” Loki said. “I know you didn’t, but—I suppose, it is easy to forget.”

“You do have a tendency to get lost in your head,” Tony remarked.

“Says the man that can’t hear anything when he’s coding something,” Loki retorted.

As Tony went to comb his fingers through Loki’s hair again, Loki let Tony’s wrist slide out of his grip. “I enjoyed taking those photos for you,” Tony said. “And it’s hot to have a boyfriend that writes the way you do, I’m not going to lie.”

“I must say, I enjoy your photos a lot as well.”

“I bet,” Tony said proudly. He felt Loki’s lips curve up into a smile as he leaned into Tony’s hand.

Tony’d never had a partner that he’d wanted to have pillow talk like this with before. It was kinda remarkable how content he felt now, especially considering how he’d felt not that long ago. It was nice just to lay in bed and talk about the things they needed to. Tony let go, his hand set on the bed between them.

“I—” Loki’s leg twitched against him. “Would like to try with you. Another night, obviously, but—I would like to know if you have a preference. I don’t know that I’ve asked you directly. I don’t want you to feel obligated to be receiving if you don’t wish to be just because you always were in my stories.”

“Now that is something that I’ve put some thought into,” Tony said cheerfully. “And for your first time, I think it’d be easier if I bottomed. I want to, obviously. I know you said something a while back about wanting to take it on your stomach, but I think maybe we should wait for that until we kind of get the hang of it. We can always switch it up later.”

“You didn’t answer the question.”

“Oh. Well I guess, it’s more like, it depends, you know? They both have their pros and cons.” Tony’d had good and bad experiences with both. “And anyway, Lo, you were fantastic in your stories. I’m kind of excited about it.”

Loki was quiet. Probably thinking. “But we’ll go slow, alright?” Tony said.

“Alright.”

“You don’t have to worry about it. If something goes wrong, trust me, I’ve probably seen it or been through it already so I won’t freak out. Promise.”

Loki breathed out a little laugh. “What?” Tony asked.

“I don’t know,” Loki said. The sheets rustled. “Perhaps it is the idea that you’ve seen everything already.”

“Well not with you, obviously,” Tony said. He propped his head up on his elbow. “That’s the fun part. And it’s kind of still hard for me to believe you don’t have like a secret ex that you can’t tell anyone about because they’re like an organized crime boss or a secret agent or something. I wouldn’t be surprised. Just saying.”

“What makes you think they’re my ex? Maybe I’m with them even now, using them to advance my

company.”

“I don’t like that idea,” Tony admitted, even though he knew Loki was kidding.

“Ah, well, it’s for the best I’m lying then.”

“Mhmm,” Tony said.

They laid there in comfortable silence, the light dappling the bed as clumps of snowflakes fell past the streetlights.

“Okay, well. Good talk,” Tony joked, patting Loki patronizingly. Loki laughed, drawing closer in the bed.

“I really want a cigarette right now,” he muttered.

“I was reading this thing the other day that when you’ve got a craving for a cigarette it’s an oral fixation. So if you need to suck on something, I’m happy to oblige—”

Loki flicked his arm. “I have a craving for a cigarette because I’m a recovering smoker,” he said flatly. “Not because I miss sucking someone’s dick.”

Tony laughed. Even though he couldn’t see Loki’s face perfectly in the dark, he knew exactly what expression he was making. “Well if you change your mind, I’m right here.”

Loki threw his arm over Tony, pulling in close to him. He set his head on Tony’s pillow. “It’s reassuring to know you’re such an opportunist.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

Loki’s fingers circled his back. “Not at all,” he said, tone colored by affection. His hand went still. Then it vanished as he pulled the blanket up over their shoulders. Tony shifted so that there was just enough light for him to see Loki yawn.

Tony wrapped his arm around Loki, their legs already tangled together. The part of his brain that wasn’t shrieking with lust over his boyfriend’s bare skin pressing against his was slowly winning with an overwhelming sense of comfort. “Goodnight, Lo,” Tony said, letting the warmth and contentment settle over him. He hadn’t realized how much they’d needed to say those things until they had. He’d had no idea what a sense of security it would give him. He’d been used to learning through trial and error, but this was much better.

“Night Tony,” Loki answered, hooking his ankle over Tony’s.

For a while Tony laid there, basking in the new experience of getting so close to someone, but when he heard Loki’s breathing slow to sleeping, he nodded off as well.

Chapter 31

They'd gone out to see a movie and been back at Tony's apartment for all of five minutes when Loki's phone rang. "Hello?" Loki's tone sounded like he was familiar with the caller. He sat down on the couch. Tony lingered beside the doorframe of the kitchen with a soda in his hand.

"I'm sorry to hear that—I—" Whoever it was cut Loki off repeatedly, judging by the look on Loki's face. He bit on his lips, brow pinching down in thought. Tony thought he saw sympathy too. "Tonight? I—" Loki sighed irritably as whoever it was interrupted. "I'm at Tony's," Loki said, fingers drumming along the edge of the arm rest. "Where are Fandral and Hogun and—" Loki went silent as he listened. "I'm not avoiding them," he insisted. "We were never that close to begin with."

Tony took a couple of steps into the room. Loki glanced over at him, smiling uncomfortably and making a gesture towards his phone before whatever was being said caught his attention again. "I—Fine, I'll ask him. Hold on."

Loki tapped at his phone before turning to Tony.

"Who is it?" Tony asked.

"Thor," Loki said, the name loaded with conflicted emotion. "Jane dumped him and he wants to go out drinking. None of his friends are available tonight, naturally."

"Oh." After their talk last night, they'd had a new sense of closeness. Tony couldn't really describe it, but it was there. And he'd felt pretty good about how things would go tonight.

"You don't have to come," Loki said. "He'll just get drunk and be obnoxious."

"Are you going?"

Loki frowned to the side, thinking. "Yes," he said. As distraught as he acted about the idea, Tony still got the distinct impression that Loki wanted to be there for his brother.

And if that's where Loki was going to be, well, it kind of sucked compared to what Tony wanted his evening to be, but maybe he'd get to talk to drunk Loki again. That'd be fun. Plus, he'd kind of rather be with Loki regardless. "I'll come," Tony said with a shrug.

Loki stared at him critically for a moment. Then he was back at his phone. "We'll come," he said. "But I will not be bailing you out of anything, do you hear me?" Then Loki scowled. "Since when?"

"Text me the address," Loki said. "We'll meet you there."

When he hung up Tony said, "What'd he say at the end?"

Loki rolled his eyes. "He said that *I'm* the one that always gets us into trouble." Tony laughed. Loki gave him a dirty look to as he got up off the couch, brushing his suit jacket off. "Come along," Loki told him. "I'm driving."

Tony just grinned in amusement, following his lead.

It didn't really surprise Tony that they ended up at a sports bar with a bunch of generic memorabilia on the walls and a massive TV playing a football game. What did surprise him was the almost sheepish way Thor was sitting in the booth as he waited for them. He brightened when he spotted them approaching though.

"Tony, it's nice to see you again," Thor exclaimed as Tony sat down. Loki slid in beside him.

"You too. Hey, uh, thanks for the connection to Circuits Maximus. It's been a great fit," Tony said.

"Yes, Loki's told me that you've been quite happy there." Loki shifted beside him, but Tony missed seeing his reaction.

"Yeah, it's great." Before anything else could be said, their waiter appeared. Thor ordered a pitcher of beer for them. Tony put in for pub fries and they all ordered burgers. There was a moment of awkward silence when the waiter left. "So uh, Thor," Tony said. "Do you usually hang out here?"

"Sure. I like watching the game," Thor said, nodding towards the TV. "Do you have a favorite team?"

"Not football so much. Sometimes I watch basketball," Tony offered.

The conversation lapsed for a moment. Tony started flitting across ideas of what to say when the waiter returned with their beer pitcher. Thor poured them all a glass. "Cheers," he said, holding his up for a toast.

Tony clinked his glass, not really sure what they were toasting. He didn't know Thor well enough to bring up the breakup. He didn't want to take the risk of making a bad joke either.

Loki took one sip of his beer before setting it down with a frown. "This isn't what you drink," he said.

Thor shrugged. "He probably misheard me."

"You hate this brand," Loki said.

"It's fine," Thor said. Tony was inclined to agree with Thor, but Loki was already getting up. "Really—"

"—I'm just going to have the bartender fix it, they're standing right there," Loki said, grabbing the pitcher. "It'll only take a second."

He left, and Tony felt kinda pissed with him for it. He didn't want to be left alone at the table with Thor. What if the guy used this as an opportunity to give him the shovel talk? Tony nervously glanced over. Thor was watching his brother with a half smile on his face. "He always gets things done," Thor said.

"Yeah," Tony said.

Thor turned his full attention on Tony, not at all acting confrontational. "Loki told me that you like to design things. He said you made a highly detailed model of a space ship?" That had to be the Star Trek model. He couldn't believe Loki told him about it. "It sounds like you could've worked for NASA," Thor teased. Apparently, Loki had really talked it up too.

"Maybe," Tony said. "Do you make anything?"

Thor thought about it for a moment. “I did some metal work in college for my arts requirement,” he said. “Loki was always more of the artist in the family. You should see some of his paintings.”

“Loki said he got rid of all of them,” Tony said.

There was amusement in Thor’s eyes, like he didn’t agree, but he didn’t call Loki out on it and Loki was returning with a full pitcher of beer anyway. “Where’d you get that?” Tony exclaimed, noticing the drink in Loki’s other hand.

“This is for me,” Loki said, setting the martini glass down on the table. It was filled with a bright blue liquid, and a set of ribbons had been tied on the handle in a decorative flourish.

“Is it your birthday?” Tony asked, reaching for the ribbons to look at them.

Loki took it out of his reach, taking the first sip. “Let me try it,” Tony insisted as Thor poured himself a new glass of beer. Loki angled himself to the side so that Tony couldn’t reach. “That’s not going to go with a burger, you know.”

“Then why are you so keen to try it?” Loki asked. The second Loki’s attention was back on him, Tony gave him the best puppy dog eyes he could manage. Loki huffed, rolling his eyes as he extended the glass out towards Tony.

“It doesn’t taste like alcohol,” Tony declared.

“That’s because it isn’t,” Loki told him with just a hint of condescension. “It’s a pure sugar cocktail that I’m going to enjoy the hell out of if somebody gives me my glass back.”

“You’ve always had a sweet tooth,” Thor said.

Tony reluctantly gave it back.

“I have,” Loki said, setting the glass down on his side of the table. Tony took another look at the ribbons and then looked for the bartender. The guy’s back was to them. He had whitish gray hair that was spiked upwards, and even though Tony couldn’t tell, he hoped that the guy was super old. “Tony,” Loki said, drawing his attention back. Loki smiled at him. Thor was staring into his beer.

“Yeah?”

“Do you want to tell Thor about the movie we saw?”

“Oh. Sure. So there was this huge alien space invasion and these six people get together to stop it. It was okay, kind of unrealistic. Loki and I went and got schwarma afterwards.”

“At least the fight scenes would be worth watching,” Thor said.

“Yeah. One guy swung a hammer through a couple aliens.”

“That doesn’t sound practical,” Thor said.

Tony nodded as their waiter arrived with their food. Tony plunged into his burger, hungrier than he’d expected to be. “Thanks,” Thor said as Loki set his pickle wedge on Thor’s plate without a word.

Tony recalled the snake story Loki had told him. “Hey so Thor,” Tony said with a degree of enthusiasm that should’ve been suspicious. “Do you have any good childhood stories about you and Loki?”

Thor glanced at Loki. “He’s already heard the one about the snake,” Loki said dryly. He didn’t seem surprised that Tony was asking.

“That’s a good one,” Thor said. “But our vacation in Boulder was pretty good too.” Loki started to smirk. “Our father had gotten a corvette as a rental car and Loki talked me into taking it out—”

“—You wanted to drive it,” Loki interrupted. “I just said I wouldn’t tell.”

Thor made such a put upon face that Tony bit his lips not to burst out laughing. “You,” Thor started again, “Convinced me that we would have it back before they got back from seeing their show.” Loki did a little eye roll that was as close to an admission of guilt as he was going to get. “We were staying at a cabin that was within walking distance of some theater. We knew when their show got out, so we took the car down to the strip where the shops were.”

“It was boring. There was nothing there,” Loki said.

Thor nodded. “We couldn’t find anything decent to do and everyone that was out was our parents’ age. So we drove around for a while—”

“—and Thor did donuts in the parking lot of some hotel—”

Thor grinned at the memory. “—And then we went back, thinking we had about twenty minutes until their show was over. Except when we pulled up to the cabin, the lights were on.” Thor took a sip of his beer. Loki was grinning, tracing his finger along the stem of his glass. “I thought we were screwed but then Loki came up with the idea to say that he’d gotten sick and I’d driven him to the hospital. So we go into the house and I’m practically carrying Loki. He was very good at looking like he was on death’s doorstep.”

“It’s easy when you know how pissed Father’s going to be,” Loki said.

Thor nodded sympathetically. “When we walked in the door, our mother was furious until the moment she set eyes on Loki. I told her we’d gone to the hospital but came back because the ER was overcrowded.”

“I’d been worried they’d ask for the bill as proof,” Loki explained.

“It was a bit of a stretch,” Thor said. “Then our mother was insistent that Loki go and see somebody, so she called up the hospital to ask about the ER. I thought they were going to tell her that nobody was there and she’d figure it out.”

“I thought we were screwed at that point too,” Loki said.

“But then she called,” Thor said, triumph shining in his eyes. “And they told her it was a seven hour wait time.”

Loki shook his head, smiling. “We were really lucky.”

“We were,” Thor said with the same smile.

“But then what’d she do about you being sick?” Tony asked.

“She called one of her friends who was a doctor and he told her to have me drink fluids and get some rest. In the morning, I was magically better just in time to go skiing.”

They made Tony kind of wish that he’d grown up with a sibling. “Do you have any other stories?”

Tony asked.

“Tell him about the marshmallow cookies,” Thor said.

Loki gave him a sour look. “That wasn’t me.”

“Yes it was,” Thor said. “You’re the one that likes sweets,” he said, gesturing towards Loki’s drink.

Loki scowled at him. “I know it was you, Thor. You always tried to get things blamed on me. I didn’t eat the last of them—”

“—Yes you did. Just like the time you carved your initials into the downstairs desk and tried telling Mom that I did it to get you in trouble—”

“—Oh, like the time you knocked over that vase and got me grounded for a week—”

“—You deserved it for the things you got away with. I can’t even count the number of times I caught you stealing clothes out of my closet since all you ever wore was black—”

Tony was starting to change his mind about the whole sibling thing.

“—So,” Tony said loudly. “Anyone want some of my fries?”

Loki and Thor both got his point. Loki reached over and stole a clump with melted cheese and bacon bits on them. Thor refilled his glass.

Loki reached and took more fries from Tony’s plate, and Tony instantly knew Loki was doing it to mess with him. He snatched fries from Loki’s plate, deliberately stealing the one waffle fry that had somehow managed to find its way there.

When he looked up, Thor was watching them in melancholy. Instantly, Tony felt bad. It’d been easy to forget that they were here because Thor was going through a breakup.

Thor took a long swig of his beer. “Jane always asked me bring fast-food on the nights that she worked late,” Thor said, staring at Tony’s fries. Tony took a panicked look at Loki who was watching his brother. “We’d hang out in the observatory.” His eyes narrowed. “If she’s so good at stars and stuff, then why did I have to draw the planets for her?”

“She was just humoring you,” Loki explained.

“Don’t tell him that,” Tony muttered, patting Loki’s arm to get his attention.

“It’s too late,” Loki said.

“You’re right Loki,” Thor said. “She *was* humoring me.” He picked up one of the few fries left on his plate, stabbing the air with it to make a point. “She acts like we never have time to see each other and I’m the one traveling all the time, but who is in their lab all the time?” Thor bit into the fry. “Not me.”

Loki reached across the table and patted him on the arm.

“Her place was always a mess. It was cramped and she had no sense of design. She lived off of cereal boxes. And at least I can drive,” Thor said. “She didn’t dump me. I dumped her,” he declared. Tony held his breath not to laugh at the look on Loki’s face. “I am much better off.”

“There are plenty of fish in the sea,” Tony consoled him.

“There are,” Thor exclaimed, grabbing his beer. He tipped it in a cheers gesture before taking a huge drink. Loki sighed beside Tony. “I’m going to have a new girlfriend next week,” Thor said, brushing the foam from his lip.

“Perhaps you should wait a bit,” Loki said. “Figure out what you want from a—”

“—I’ll be fine,” Thor said. He finished his drink, going to pour another. Then he excused himself to go to the bathroom. Loki sighed again, dropping his head back against the booth.

“Give him another couple of beers and he’ll be crying over how wonderful she was,” Loki said. He closed his eyes for a brief moment. “Then tomorrow he really will be over it, aside from some petty bitterness if it’s brought up.”

“Yeah. I didn’t peg him as bitter before now,” Tony said. He did a good job of it though.

“He has his moments,” Loki said. He turned to Tony, expression soft with affection. “I’m glad you came along,” he said.

“Me too,” Tony said. He really wished they were back at his place or Loki’s though.

Loki smiled at him, patting his thigh under the table. “Thor liked Jane a lot,” Loki said, leaning back. He grabbed his glass.

“Do you think he was in love with her?”

Loki shook his head, eyes pensive, before taking a sip. “I think they were both infatuated,” he said. “But I’m certain it’s painful.”

“Yeah,” Tony said. He grabbed his drink, finishing off what was left of it before he reached for the pitcher. “You sure you don’t want at least one drink, Lo?”

“I’m going to drive you both home,” Loki said. It was a simple statement, but it still made Tony feel warm and cared for.

“Are you going to stay at my place tonight?” Tony asked.

“Would you like to stay at mine?” Loki asked. “It’s a closer drive to Thor’s.”

“Sure,” Tony said. “I like your place too.” Loki smiled at him just as Thor was returning.

“I thought of another story for you Tony,” he said. “It’s about the time I broke Loki out of prison.”

“Don’t tell him that one,” Loki said.

“Why not? It’s a fun one.”

Loki turned to Tony to spoil the fun. “It was a game we were playing in the neighborhood as kids,” Loki said. “He broke me out of the jail so I’d tell him where the other kids’ loot was. Then he tricked me into wearing a pair of plastic handcuffs so I wouldn’t turn on him and try to win the game myself. He’s still proud of himself for it.”

“I am,” Thor said.

Tony grabbed his drink, unsure of whether or not to laugh.

By the time they decided they were all ready to go home, Tony'd had a couple more beers and heard half a dozen more childhood stories and a hell of a lot more about Jane. Thor had followed the exact course that Loki had said he would.

Loki slung his arm over Thor's shoulders, guiding him in the parking lot. "I'm fine," Thor said.

"I'm driving you home," Loki said, the headlights on his car flashing as he unlocked it. "Get in." He helped Thor into the passenger seat as Tony got in the back. Loki bitched at Thor about putting on his seatbelt before pushing the door shut. Tony smiled at Loki as he watched him go around the car. Who'd have guessed he could be a mother hen?

When Loki got in, he angled his rearview mirror to check on Tony. Tony gave him a thumbs up. Loki shook his head, amused. The engine revved to life.

They were quiet as they drove to Thor's place. Tony was curious to see what it looked like, but when they got there, Loki told him to wait in the car. It was a massive high-rise building. Tony rested his head against the glass of the window. It'd been a nice evening, actually. Tony had enjoyed himself.

A little while later, Loki came back out. He got in the front seat, then paused. "Am I your chauffeur tonight?"

"What? Oh." Tony hadn't thought about sitting in the front. He crawled over the center console, sliding and fumbling. Loki had to be regretting saying anything. Tony tried the seatbelt three times before he got it. Then he leaned against the glass again. After a moment, Loki put the car in reverse.

Tony didn't realize that he'd drifted off until Loki was waking him up. He gave Loki a sappy smile as Loki's hand rested on his shoulder. After a second, Loki broke into a smile, amused by something. "Let's get you to bed."

Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As Tony woke up, joy swept through him when he recognized that he was in Loki's bedroom. He rolled over, grinning at the thought of seeing Loki. His spot was empty.

The sheets were tousled to the side. Tony sat up. Rubbing his eyes, Tony slid out of bed, intent on finding him.

Tony was quiet as he pulled the bedroom door open. Loki didn't seem to hear him. He caught Tony's attention though, standing beside his living room window holding a coffee mug. He was watching something outside with an amused expression.

No one had a right to look as good as he did in the morning. He was wearing a plush gray robe that Tony hadn't seen before over his usual black pajamas, and his hair had been pulled back so that half was still down. Tony tugged at the collar of the pajamas Loki had coaxed him into wearing the night before.

"What're you looking at?" Tony asked, padding over.

Loki turned to him with a soft smile on his lips. "Down there," he said, his finger hovering above the glass. "Those girls are piling the snow around one of the cars. See it?"

They weren't just piling snow on it. One was creating what looked like an angler fish or a monster out of the snow so that it looked like it was consuming the car while her friend made snowmen that were in various states of terror, watching it. "I wonder if that's their car," Tony said with a laugh.

"I doubt it." Loki took a sip of his coffee.

The smell was heavenly. "Is there more of that?" Tony asked, gesturing to his cup.

"The grounds are in a tin next to the coffee maker."

Tony shuffled away. Tony remembered where the mugs were, but it wasn't until he was scooping out a spoonful of coffee grinds that he realized how nice it was to just help himself to something in Loki's kitchen. He brewed the single cup and joined Loki back at the window.

Again, Tony admired how cozy and content Loki looked, his eyes bright as he watched the scene below.

Loki raised an eyebrow when Tony leaned against him, resting his head on Loki as he held his mug so it wouldn't spill. "You're awfully affectionate this morning," Loki said. Tony stared down at Loki's slippers, smiling in response. Loki took a sip, careful not to disturb Tony from his spot.

"I'd be down for a pajamas and snuggling on the couch watching Star Trek morning," Tony said.

"What a shame," Loki said. "I was just about to offer to make pancakes for breakfast."

"Or that too," Tony said. "Definitely that too."

Loki bent down and kissed the top of his head. Tony practically glowed at the doting motion. He stood there in happy silence, coveting the memory already.

Then Tony breathed out a laugh. “What?” Loki asked.

“Pancakes from my beefcake,” he said, cracking up at his own stupid joke.

Loki outright laughed, spilling coffee on the floor. “Don’t worry about it,” Loki said as Tony started to panic. “I’ve got paper towels in the kitchen. Come on, you can get started with the mix while I clean it up.”

Tony followed Loki into the kitchen. “The mix is on the second shelf of the pantry,” Loki said, nodding his head towards it.

Tony drew the doors open. “Hey, you stocked this more since last time,” Tony said.

Loki turned back and smiled at him. “I was planning on having a guest.”

“Me?”

“You.”

Tony smiled, and even though he’d just said it to be a brat, Loki’s playful amusement made Tony’s smile turn genuine. Loki left to clean up the spill as Tony got the mix started. It wasn’t difficult to find the bowl and mixing spoon that Tony needed. When Loki came back in, he started to heat the frying pan.

Tony brought the finished batter over to him and watched as Loki poured it into the pan. The scent of melting butter from the heat of the pan made Tony’s mouth water.

“I don’t know why we didn’t do sleepovers before this,” Tony said. They’d missed out on awesome mornings like this.

“I think you do,” Loki said with some amusement, flipping the pancake over.

Tony grinned. “Well, okay, I sort of do know. But man, we should’ve gotten together sooner. This is awesome.”

“Apparently, all I have to do is feed you to hear declarations of your undying love,” Loki said, reaching past Tony for a plate to set the finished pancake on.

“Hey. That wasn’t a declaration of undying love,” Tony said. “And this may be one of the very few times that you’re not stealing food from me.”

“Nonsense,” Loki said. “I brought you pastries and coffee all the time.”

“I wouldn’t say all the time,” Tony said. His mouth was watering. “And like half of my fridge was eaten by you.”

“I was hungry.”

Tony made a put upon sigh. Then, deciding that he needed more coffee, he went back to Loki’s coffee maker. “Do you feel hungover?” Loki asked, the pan sizzling beneath his voice.

Tony frowned. “Nope. I just felt tired last night. It wasn’t too bad.” Loki set another pancake on the growing stack. “Do you think Thor is?”

“Probably,” Loki said. “I set a glass of water beside his bed, but he seemed fine enough when I left. He might be fine this morning. He drinks more often.”

Tony chuckled. “You do like him.”

Loki’s expression turned sour. “I tolerate him,” Loki corrected Tony, but they both had to know it was bullshit. “Watch it or else I’m only making enough for me.”

“No,” Tony said, wrapping his arms around Loki’s waist. “Please. I’ll be good.”

Loki smiled, making no movement to dislodge Tony. “Convince me,” he challenged Tony.

Tony pushed up onto his tippy toes, kissing the back of Loki’s neck. “Please?” Loki was melting into him, angling his head to invite Tony to mark the spot between his neck and shoulder.

“We’ll see,” Loki said noncommittally, the jerk. Feeling playful, Tony licked a stripe up Loki’s neck, as far from sexy as it was possible to be. Loki made a sound of disgust. “Are you—” Tony started to laugh, shaking against Loki as he held on tight to him. “You brat. Get back. This is a hot stove.”

Tony was beaming as he breathed in against Loki’s robe. To be silly and affectionate and doting without feeling stupid about it...Tony’d never gotten to that place with someone before. And he loved it. “Do I get pancakes?” Tony asked.

“Fine,” Loki said, pushing Tony back with his elbow. Tony let go, still beaming as he started to walk away. “I swear,” Loki muttered, pouring fresh batter into the pan.

Of course, Tony got pancakes and he ate them with glee, playing footsie under the table the whole time and trying to get Loki to break into a smile through the dirty looks of reprimand he was trying to give Tony. They left the mess in the kitchen and migrated over to the couch in the living room. Tony stole the throw blanket from the couch, cocooning himself as Loki got the TV set up.

Tony extended his arm out like a wing as Loki approached the couch to sit down, inviting him into the blanket. Loki hesitated for a moment before accepting, wedging his long legs against his chest as he tucked himself under Tony’s arm. Tony immediately leaned into him, tossing the blanket around the front of him too like a bat giving a hug.

“I’m relieved that we won’t be freezing to death,” Loki said.

“Hey. There’s a lot of snow out there,” Tony warned him. “We’d better not take any chances.”

“You’re absolutely right,” Loki conceded. He rested his head against Tony, looking as utterly content as Tony felt.

Chapter End Notes

You can lower your pitchforks, the next chapter will be smut. ;D

Remember that drama and angst route I said maybe I'd do someday? Well, it turned out someday was now, so that's [here](#) if you're interested! It is heavy and a very different take from where this story here is going, so I understand if it's not your thing too!

I'm also curious what you'd like see with the boys, though I can't promise it'll happen.
:)

Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

It feels like forever since I updated this, and it's only been two weeks. XD Enjoy!

As the morning drifted on, they slumped ever so slowly, until Tony was wedging himself between the back of couch and Loki, his arm and the blanket wrapped around Loki. It was one of Tony's favorite episodes. He was glued to the screen when Loki wormed to roll over so that he was facing Tony.

"Hmm?" Tony blinked, suddenly aware of the pleased grin curling across Loki's lips and the attention focused entirely on him.

Loki reached up, brushing a few bedraggled locks of thick brown hair from Tony's forehead. "Tony," he said with a slight purr. Tony's gaze had snuck back over to the TV, but now it snapped back to Loki. He knew that tone of voice. Loki's fingers curled around his waist. "I would like to try today."

Tony's heart skipped a beat. He stared at Loki for a moment, at the hopefulness and slight fear of rejection in his expression, at the soft smile that hadn't left his lips.

Tony closed his eyes, breathing in for a moment. He poked Loki's forehead with his pointer finger. "You're a goober."

"A what?" Loki blurted, bafflement coloring his voice.

The one fucking time Tony wasn't even slightly prepared, and Loki wanted to try. "A goober," Tony repeated. He grinned then, right on the edge of laughing. Loki blinked, patient but confused, a few steps away from insecure. Tony didn't let him dangle on the hook. "You have the worst timing," Tony explained. "The morning after a night of drinking and greasy junk food isn't exactly my top choice for the first time we do this," Tony said, a tad bit softer. Loki relaxed, though there was a hint of disappointment in the tilt of his lips. "Let's do it another day," Tony said, fighting off a yawn. He hadn't even brushed his teeth yet.

The weird thing for Tony was that last time when he wanted to and Loki had said no, it felt terrible. But this morning he didn't feel bad about it. He knew they would eventually and he was excited about that, but this morning he didn't mind missing out. Hell, he'd be good lying on the couch like this all day. He was pretty damn happy already.

Loki had that tender expression back on his face though, the one that made Tony squirm. "Could I convince you to make out on the couch with me instead?"

"I don't know if you'd have to convince me," Tony said. "But, uh." His mouth had to taste horrible, right. He hadn't showered either. "I'd be more into taking a bath together in that palace of yours."

"It's not a palace," Loki complained.

"It kind of is," Tony said. Loki rolled his eyes to the side. Tony could still tell from his expression

that Loki was pleased with the compliment, even if he didn't want to admit it. "Think about my shower and then tell me yours is not a palace." Loki sighed dramatically. "It has bath bombs and plants that actually breathe and stuff."

"You could get a plant for your apartment if you wanted to," Loki pointed out, starting to sit up. The chill of the room rushed in as his body and the blanket vanished from Tony's side.

Tony pouted, drawing the blanket back in around himself even while their ankles were still tangled up together. "Are you cold?" Loki asked.

"Yes," Tony said petulantly.

Loki laughed, glancing away. He took the warmth of his legs away too, standing up. "Shall I fill the bath with hot water so it's ready for you then?" Loki asked, amused.

Holy shit. Would he do that? Awesome. "Yes," Tony said. Loki shook his head, and Tony had visions of him making the tub ice cold and tricking Tony or some other plot, but he liked the idea of being doted on more. "Please," he added, certain he saw the usual mischievous glint in his boyfriend's eyes.

"I'll call to you when it's ready," Loki said. "You can walk yourself over."

"You mean you won't carry me there?" Tony asked, really pushing his luck.

"No," Loki said pointedly. Tony pouted his lips but Loki only turned on his heel, his lithe form striding away with a sensuality to it that made Tony have second thoughts about saying no to Loki's offer this morning.

Tony drew the blanket in tight, wondering if he'd be able to finish the episode before Loki called for him.

It was close. It was about five minutes before the end when Loki's voice called from the bathroom. Tony reluctantly left his blanket behind, stretching as he stood. While he shuffled towards the bathroom he combed his hair with his fingers. He had stubble where the crisp lines of his beard were supposed to be. Loki would let him borrow his razor. He had one, right? He had to. Tony'd never seen even a whisper of five o'clock shadow on him. "Tony," Loki called again.

"I'm here," Tony said, walking into Loki's bedroom. The bathroom door was cracked. He pushed it open, steam billowing past him, and nudged it shut with his foot. Loki was already in the tub, his arms draped along the sides, looking like he owned the place.

Which he did, now that Tony thought about it.

"Did you light candles? You're a class act," Tony said proudly, looking over the tub in awe. If he'd stayed in his dad's business, he would've blown a lot of his cash on stuff like this too. Loki smirked at the compliment. The candle light caught on the decorative crystals, making them glow. "Palace," Tony told him.

"Get in already," Loki said, trying not to smile.

"You just want to see me naked," Tony said as he tugged off his shirt. He grinned at Loki as he dropped it, making a show out of taking off the silk pajama bottoms and underwear. Then he hurried to hop in the warm tub, water sloshing against Loki's bare chest as the water accommodated Tony. The tall glass jar of bath bombs on the ledge caught Tony's eye as he sunk in. "Did you pick one of these out yet?"

“No,” Loki said, not sounding particularly interested in it.

Tony looked back over his shoulder at Loki. Vibrant green eyes were set on him, Loki’s pale skin flushed pink in the heat, a few strands of wet hair plastered to his pale forehead. The rest of his hair had been pulled on top of his head in a bun. He was gorgeous. He was always gorgeous. Tony turned back to the jar.

Since Loki wasn’t telling him not to, Tony rifled through the jar of bath bombs, picking each one up and giving it a whiff before accepting or rejecting it. He’d dropped three into the tub before Loki’s voice said behind him, “You do realize those won’t all smell the same when they’ve been mixed together.”

Tony shrugged, setting the jar down. “They’ll dilute.” He sank in up to his shoulders. Loki’s square tub might as well have been called a pool. At least two regular tubs could fit in it.

A thick blue foam was furling out of one of the bath bombs, scenting the water with something sweet. Tony traced his fingers through the foam. Whirls of varying shades spun in the water. Another one was spreading gold glitter into the water. Had he ever seen gold glitter on Loki’s skin? He didn’t think he had. What a shame that was.

When Tony glanced up, Loki was watching him with one eyebrow raised. “Come here.”

Tony pushed himself through the water, accidentally smacking into Loki’s chest. He caught himself, water dripping from his hands and down Loki’s chest as Tony tried to pivot back around. Loki was smiling. Tony could feel Loki’s hard cock brush against him. “Somebody’s excited,” Tony teased.

“Mhmm.” Loki’s arms caught around Tony’s waist, drawing him in. Loki’s lips pressed at his neck.

Tony smiled, but something else leapt into his mind. “I don’t want to be the little spoon,” he complained. Loki was cradling him in the tub, and Tony was feeling short.

“Why not?” Loki asked. “You normally do in bed.” He waited a moment for a response, but Tony didn’t want to explain it. “This is easier.”

Tony crossed his arms, trying not to be distracted by how wonderful it felt to have Loki pressed against him. “Why? Because I’m short?” So much for not explaining it.

“...I would say fun sized.”

“That’s so much worse!” Tony squawked, turning around so that Loki could appreciate the full effect of his indignation. Loki’s placid expression didn’t leave, much to Tony’s dismay. There was something self-assured and burning in his eyes, though. Tony guessed that it was lust, but all he could really say was that it sent a good kind of shiver down his spine. He turned back around to rant. “Nobody wants to get fun sized candy on Halloween. They want king sized—”

“—Fine, then you are king sized,” Loki placated him, arms tightening to hold Tony closer to his chest. A soft smile crossed Tony’s lips. He liked the silly title more than Loki knew. His boyfriend’s lips returned his neck, and Tony found himself sinking into it. The warmth of the bath coupled with soft, lingering kisses was wonderful.

Loki paused, resting his forehead against Tony. He breathed out, his breath drifting down Tony’s shoulders. “Say it,” he said.

“Say what?” That the water smelled like a candy shop? Because it did.

“The dick joke you want to make.”

Tony grinned, delighted. He’d missed that one. How the hell could he miss that one? Well, he wouldn’t miss it now. “That’s not the only thing about me that’s king sized,” Tony announced.

“That’s what I thought,” Loki muttered, resigned. Tony felt his lips slip into a smile though before they were back at Tony’s neck, teeth grazing his skin. Tony’s cock twitched. “May I confirm for myself?”

“Yes,” Tony said, thrilled that Loki was taking the lead. “Make sure you check extra well, alright? I don’t want you to miss anything.”

“No, we wouldn’t want that,” Loki muttered, his lips trailing down Tony’s shoulder as one hand slipped down to grasp Tony’s cock. His eyes fluttered shut as Loki’s hand tugged downward, releasing him to return and cup his balls. Tony heard himself whine when Loki found an especially sensitive spot. Loki’s thumb returned to it and Tony groaned, pressing up against Loki as he sucked in a breath. Loki’s hard cock had wedged between them, the head rubbing against Tony’s lower back as the shaft slid between his cheeks.

Tony rocked his hips in Loki’s lap, the friction making his head spin. It was so close to what he’d been fantasizing about for ages. Loki’s breath shuddered behind him. One hand set on Tony’s chest over his heart. Loki’s tongue traced the shell of his ear, nipping just as Tony leaned into it.

Tony’s eyes flickered open, taking in the rise of the steam off the water in the hazy candle light. “Tony,” Loki murmured, teasing Tony’s peaked nipple. “Would you mind if I had you like this all day?” He asked coyly.

Tony shifted just to feel Loki’s cock rub against him. “I might insist on it,” Tony quipped back.

Loki’s lips pressed behind his hear. “Then who am I to deny you?” Loki muttered. He wrapped his arms around Tony’s chest, pulling Tony in tighter against him. Immediately, Tony missed the attention to his cock.

“Don’t stop.” The water sloshed as Tony shifted slightly, but then Loki’s hands were moving again and Tony was pushing back against him, undulating his hips to feel the tantalizing slide of Loki against him. It was something else entirely to let Loki run the show, to find himself held against Loki’s chest with nothing to do but feel. His hands had found a home on Loki’s thighs, but they didn’t do much except hold on and fail to ground Tony.

Loki’s sultry, melodic voice came behind him. “You are gorgeous like this.” Tony’s gaze dropped to the water. Loki’s pale hand vanished in the water as it tugged down Tony’s flushed cock, his thumb tracing a vein and teasing the slit before his hand came back into view. Tony watched the rhythm, fighting off release, trying to stay floating in his arousal and Loki’s attention. “If only I had a mirror angled to watch you from the reverse as well.”

Water pattered back into the tub as Tony reached up behind him, stretching his chest as he found Loki’s tied back locks to run his nails against, desperate to cradle Loki to him somehow. Loki leaned into his touch, lips pressing at whatever skin they could reach as the hand tugging Tony’s cock became more insistent, his other hand holding Tony’s hip to him.

A moan fell from Tony’s lips, but he was only half aware of it as he rolled his hips, both yearning for and dreading that tip over the edge. He thrust helplessly into Loki’s hand. Instantly, Loki’s grip

on his hip became tighter, his head bowing down to nip at the juncture between Tony's neck and shoulder. "Lo," Tony muttered. Begged maybe. His hand slipped from Loki's head and grasped at Loki's thigh. "Lo," he said louder, Loki's hand squeezing at the base of his shaft.

Loki answered with a moan behind him. It was beautiful and broken in the middle. In the back of his mind, Tony recognized that Loki was coming apart, and the idea alone spurred on his own lust. He swayed his hips, trying to encourage Loki's hand to go faster. He was so close.

Loki's lips returned to his shoulder, his tongue circling the ridge of bone at the end. Tony let out a needy whine. Loki whispered his name, his fingers digging in against the soft space beside Tony's hip bone as he gave Tony's cock all the friction it wanted. Tony found himself fighting it off again, not wanting it to end. But he wanted it so badly, and Loki was everywhere.

Tony came with a shout, toes curling.

Tony sank back boneless against Loki, whose lips had never left his shoulder. Fuck, it felt so good to be adored. Tony couldn't remember the last time he'd felt so satisfied by anything. He wasn't going to try to remember, either. All he could think about was how good he felt right then.

Tony realized Loki was holding him with both arms, cradling Tony to his chest as he laved at his neck. Tony rocked his hips slightly. Nothing hard was pressing back against him.

"Did you—"

"—Mhmm."

Tony let out a breath.

He didn't even know what he wanted to say. The smug, content smirk on his face that wasn't going anywhere.

Then, slowly, Tony recognized that the water was only lukewarm, the surface no longer marked by curls of drifting steam. Loki was resting his head against Tony, still holding him close. It was nice, but it was empty compared to before. Tony never appreciated that feeling. "Want to hop in the shower?" Tony asked.

He turned around to look over his shoulder, Loki releasing him somewhat so that Tony could turn around partially. There was something unfathomably soft and tender in Loki's expression. Tony didn't give Loki another second to answer. He surged forward, planting his lips on Loki's. Tony wrapped his arms across Loki's shoulders, sliding his tongue along Loki's bottom lip before his mouth dropped open with a gasp and let Tony in. Tony delved out all the affection he felt, Loki's hands drawing down his back and sending goosebumps where the water from them trailed down his skin.

"Yes," Loki breathed out when Tony pulled back for a breath.

"In a minute," Tony muttered, returning for another kiss.

Chapter 34

Tony hadn't been thinking about Dum-E when they went to his apartment after the movie. In fact, his back had been to the room when he heard Loki's exclamation of surprise. Tony nearly dropped Loki's coat from the hanger as he tried to hang it up in the hall closet.

Loki stood still as Dum-E's arm extended towards him, head whirling and spinning as if taking Loki in. Tony held his breath, watching the exchange.

Loki carefully extended his hand out towards the bot, as if to give him a handshake. Dum-E zoomed in and out from his hand, never quite daring to touch it. "How does it know I'm here?" Loki asked with genuine curiosity.

"He's got a few sensors in him," Tony explained, walking over. Dum-E immediately turned to Tony with a chirp of recognition. "I've been programming him mainly to hand things to me on request, but it hasn't been going so well." Tony shrugged, sticking his hands in his pockets. "That's why I've named him Dum-E."

"Dum-E," Loki mused, lightly setting his fingertips on Dum-E's arm with reverence.

"The carpeting's not his favorite thing in the world," Tony said. "But he can run over it with his wheels well enough, so for now it works."

"When did you make him?" Loki asked. He tilted his head to examine Dum-E from the side more closely.

"This week," Tony said. Loki glanced over at him, surprised. "I've had the plans in my head for years. I just finally got around to getting the parts and doing it."

Dum-E bowed his head before extending it, seemingly as fascinated by Loki as Loki was by him. Loki extended his hand out for Dum-E to inspect again. "He's incredible, Tony." Tony was unaccustomed to getting praise for his robotics. He actually felt bashful, as strange as that was. "And to think," Loki said, studying Dum-E, "you were working our IT desk fixing the wifi when you could do this."

"It's just some basic engineering," Tony said. "Anyone could do it."

"I disagree wholeheartedly," Loki said, gazing at him with pride. He must've read Tony's uncertainty though because he took a step back from Dum-E. "I'm going to steal a drink from your fridge."

"I don't know if I'd really call that stealing," Tony said, following Loki's lead into the kitchen. They'd skipped dinner because they'd filled up on popcorn at the movie. Dum-E appeared in the doorway like a lonely puppy.

Loki had taken one of the tea fusion bottles. He unscrewed the cap, somehow managing to drop it. The pink plastic rolled towards Dum-E. His claw arm immediately smashed towards the floor, crunching the cap. Tony set his hand on his forehead. Dum-E tried twice more to grab it, but he kept smashing it instead. "Let it go," Tony told him. Dum-E's head spun before attempting once more, finally grasping it. He extended his arm outwards.

"He's endearing," Loki commented, accepting the cracked cap.

“Don’t encourage him,” Tony sighed, already running through the programming in his head to find the adjustment he needed to make.

“You could probably play catch with him,” Loki suggested.

Dum-E chirped. Tony regretted allowing him to make sounds. It’d seemed like a good idea at the time. “Go home,” he told Dum-E. The bot spun around and rolled out of sight.

“Where is he going?” Loki asked.

“I put his docking spot in the corner of the living room,” Tony said. “He wants to be helpful, but —” Tony shrugged, staring at the bottle cap in Loki’s hand. “He needs a lot of work.”

Loki was grinning, but he didn’t say anything.

Tony opened the fridge himself, rifling around towards the back for soda. When he looked back, Loki was still staring towards the doorway. “So,” Tony said. “You want to watch TV or play cards or—” Tony pursed his lips. “There’s not that much to do.” He was confident they’d come up with something, though. They always did.

Loki took a few wandering steps towards the table before setting his drink down. “I’m burnt out on cards,” Loki said, taking a seat. Tony sat down across from him. He set his chin in his hand, thinking. Loki turned to the windowsill where Tony had put his model of the *Enterprise*. “Do you have another one of these to make?”

Tony squinted at it. “Actually,” he said, standing up. “I think I have a half-finished one. Hold on.” Tony went back to the hall closet and felt around on the top shelf until his fingers grazed the top of the cardboard box. Tony had to move a few other things, but then he managed to get it down and crack open the dusty lid. “Most of it needs to be painted,” Tony said, setting the box on the table.

He was about to reassure Loki that he didn’t care that much about how the paint job turned out because he’d had the unfinished ship model for probably ten years when he remembered that Loki painted. Or had painted. “What’s it supposed to look like?” Loki asked, turning the box over.

“The paint’s pretty old. You can use some of my left over from this,” Tony said, nodding his head towards the *Enterprise*. He went to go grab it as Loki laid the pieces out on the table.

Tony started to assemble the pieces that he’d painted years ago while Loki worked on the unfinished parts. “How long have you had this?” Loki asked, noticing how worn the box was.

“I don’t even know,” Tony admitted. “It was one of those things I started at home and never finished.” He left out how his dad’s mockery for building “useless” models was a good deterrent. “This model is one of the ships from the second Star Trek movie. I can’t remember where I got it.”

“It’ll look nice with the other one,” Loki said.

“Yeah.” Tony grabbed a piece of sandpaper from the box. They worked in comfortable silence for a bit. “I can’t believe we’re sitting at home building a model on a Saturday night.”

“I think it’s enjoyable.” Loki angled his paintbrush, drawing a line with absolute precision while keeping a casual air. “Would you rather we be getting drunk and chasing tail with Thor and his friends?”

“I mean, if we weren’t together, then that’s probably what I’d be doing right now,” Tony said.

Loki took the point without saying anything. Tony figured the scorn was more directed at his brother rather than anything else. Loki angled the box to study the design again.

“How is Thor doing at work?” Tony asked. Loki hadn’t said much about him in the past week.

“Fine.” Loki rapped the paintbrush against the plastic container as he mixed the colors. “I got to pick where we ordered from for lunch yesterday. We’ve always had vendors approach us about adding a new whatever to our vending machines, but Father’s seriously considering starting some sort of employee appreciation program, like donuts on Monday morning. Thor’s been put in charge of running it.”

“You had to come up with the free donut thing after I left, didn’t you?”

“Yes. It was entirely personal,” Loki teased him.

Tony reached for the glue, grinning. “The junk food vending machine always stole my quarters.”

“I just put in the vendor’s test code and take what I want,” Loki said.

“Loki!” Tony chided him, but Loki didn’t bother to even attempt looking guilty. Tony also was kind of irked with himself for not thinking of doing that.

“We usually make less than a hundred dollars a week off them,” Loki said. Tony set the glue bottle down. Loki was methodical. He wouldn’t let something even that small slide, not unless he got a rise off it.

“You just like pulling one over.”

Loki shrugged. “Is that a crime?”

“Well technically you’re stealing from a vending machine—” Loki lightly kicked him under the table, his eyes darting up to stare at Tony, daring him with glee. “You are, Lo.” He nudged Loki’s foot. “I’m going to tell Thor.”

“Mm. That will go over well,” Loki said dryly. Tony sighed. Loki had more than enough dirt on his brother to keep him quiet over something so petty. Still, it felt good to be let in on one of Loki’s work conspiracies like old times.

Tony set the model piece down. He didn’t have anything else to do until Loki’s pieces dried.

“Maybe I’ll leverage it for some more childhood stories about you.”

Loki scowled, but it didn’t bother Tony.

“Unless you can think of one you’d like to share?” Tony asked.

Loki carefully dabbed the paintbrush at some imperfection Tony couldn’t see. “I can’t think of any at the moment.” Tony took a sip of his soda. “Although Thor did mispronounce Budapest on a conference call the other day,” Loki said with some joy. Tony sighed. “Oh,” he said, remembering something. “I heard that your favorite, Justin, got yelled at by some other people on his floor for leaving mugs unwashed in the sink. Apparently, it was quite heated. HR had to soothe some ruffled feathers.”

“Ha! That jackass deserves it,” Tony said. “He always needed me to fix shit that he screwed up on the computer, pretending that he was a coding wizard. He couldn’t even do basic HTML.”

“He never gives me any trouble,” Loki said.

“That’s because he’s afraid of you,” Tony answered.

Loki’s gaze flicked back to him. “Most people are afraid of me.”

Tony rolled his eyes. Maybe there was some truth in it, but it was hard to take Loki seriously when he put up bravado like that. “Right. You’re a badass that we mere mortals can only cower before.”

“Tony,” Loki said, twirling his tie on his finger. “Have you ever considered that perhaps I am some grand villain, just biding my time as I expand my empire?”

“I’ve seen you get a foam mustache from your beer and *try* to subtly lick it off,” Tony said. “Don’t try and sell me that.”

Loki pursed his lips, then gently set the finished piece down. “That’s going to look awesome when it’s all put together,” Tony said.

“It’s fun to attempt to match the colors,” Loki said.

“It looks great.” Tony stared down at the pieces. “I still can’t believe we came back and made this.”

“Why?” Loki set his elbow on the table, a sly grin on his lips. “Should we have gone straight to your bed instead?”

Tony smiled. He didn’t know why it was funny. It just was. “Yeah. We should’ve built the model in my bed. It’s way more comfy.”

Loki looked away, smiling to himself at Tony’s joke.

“You know,” Tony said. “I like us just being us. With anybody else we would’ve gone to my bedroom and that would’ve just been it, but it’s not like that with us.” Loki’s eyebrows furrowed, like he was trying to decipher whether Tony meant that as a compliment or not. “You don’t understand how amazing that is for me, honestly. I’ve never really had that with anybody.”

Loki’s brows flipped to sympathy instead, and there was no need for that. “It wasn’t a bad thing. I had a lot of fun, but you know. We were great as just friends, but having this too—” Tony would just have to convey it in the look he gave Loki. After a moment, Loki smiled, seemingly understanding. Tony scratched the back of his head, feeling like he’d been blabbing.

Loki thought for a moment, his expression gentle and reflective. “I’m glad we took the risk,” Loki said. “It’s been better than I’d even hoped for.”

“I’m glad we didn’t get caught, either,” Tony said. He took a sip of his soda.

Loki nodded, running his fingers through his hair. Suddenly, he smirked. “You were incredibly tempting some days.”

“If you’d gone along with it, I absolutely would’ve had sex with you on the couch,” Tony said. Loki only half looked at him, grinning at the idea as if it were still some wild temptation. “I really like the pace we’ve got going though,” Tony thought aloud. Loki’s full focus fell on him. “I think I kind of blew things out of proportion when we first started dating. I really wanted it bad, you know? And we were just kissing. Not that I resented you for it or anything,” Tony amended, holding up his hand. “Just, you know. I was ready. But now,” Tony smiled at Loki. “Whatever we do, I feel like we’ll figure it out and it’ll be good, you know? It’s nice to have that with somebody. I didn’t expect it.”

Loki's shoulders dropped, his expression softening. Then he was thinking, pensive before he spoke. "I will admit that when we first started dating the thought was intimidating, but I don't find it that way now." He relaxed in his chair, setting his hands together. "I know we built up such expectations, but it's been a pleasant surprise that we haven't—fallen for them."

"Yeah. I get that," Tony said. He picked at the tab on his soda can. "I know you asked to the other morning, but are you still interested in anal sex? Or unsure?" He just wanted an update, really. It helped to talk it out directly.

"I am uncertain, yes," Loki said. "I am not wholly convinced I'll like it, but I'm not resistant to the idea. Does that make sense?" Tony nodded. "I'd be open to trying tonight."

"I wasn't saying that as a lead in—"

"—I know," Loki assured him. He licked his lips. "But I'm offering it all the same."

Tony breathed in. He'd thought when that moment came there'd be trumpets or some nonsense, but the reality was that it was just casual. And that felt right. There wasn't some enormous weight on it.

Well, okay, he had to admit that he was super fucking excited suddenly, but he could keep a level head, alright? Somewhat. "Yeah," Tony agreed. Then he paused, a thought striking him. "You're sure you're not saying it just because we're talking about it?"

"Really, Tony, I'm not." He reached for Tony's hand. It was more comforting than romantic. "And if you'd rather it be on a night when we're both more—" Loki pressed his lips together, failing to find the right word. "In the mood, that's fine too."

"We can make it the mood," Tony said. He felt like laughing. "I should have a bunch of candles and romantic shit, shouldn't I? I don't have any except for the one in the bathroom, but I can hold up a couple flashlights if you want."

"Please don't," Loki said, cracking a grin.

"Or we can walk down a couple blocks and pick up a few dozen roses to toss over the bed," Tony suggested, raising his eyebrows.

"I've always wanted to roll around in pollen and wilted petals," Loki said. Tony nodded his head to the side, grinning.

They just sat there at the table for a moment, sharing their amusement. Loki stood up. Tony followed him to the bedroom, heart thumping, where Loki pulled him into the bed. Tony's back was pressed to the mattress as Loki laid on top of him, fingers combing through Tony's hair as their lips met.

Tony sank into the sensation. He grasped Loki's hips, running his thumb against the waistband of his pants.

There was a soft, wet smacking sound when Loki pulled away. He grinned. "Are you in the mood?" He asked, as if his own pupils weren't already blown wide. "Or should we go back down the street and get those rose petals?"

"I didn't take my allergy meds today," Tony answered, digging his fingers into Loki's hair and pulling him back down. He felt Loki's lips pull into a smile, and used it as an opportunity to suck Loki's bottom lip into his mouth and draw a moan from him. He snuck his hands up under Loki's

starched dress shirt. His skin was warm beneath the fabric.

Loki rolled his hips before propping himself up on his elbows. "Need something?" Tony asked coyly. Loki bit down on a smirk and loosened the knot in his tie.

Tony's eyes followed the way his pale fingers tugged at the fabric and how the black silk pooled against his chest. He reached for it, marveling as Loki allowed him to slide his fingers beneath his shirt collar and slowly ease the tie free. "You're not keeping that," Loki informed him.

Tony clenched the tie in his fist. "And what if I am?"

"That's my favorite tie," Loki answered, bending down to nip at Tony's neck. Tony tilted his head back with a groan. Loki's teeth barely grazed him, but it made Tony flush and writhe. He missed noticing the way Loki's hand slipped around his wrist until he felt the tie being pulled loose.

"Hey!"

Loki laughed, a low, pleased rumble. He wrenched the tie free, stuffing it in the back pocket of his pants. "Jerk," Tony mumbled.

"It *is* mine," Loki reminded him. Tony shot him a look. He couldn't stand Loki staring down at him with that smug delight in his eyes, so he cupped the back of Loki's neck and dragged him down into a rough kiss that had Loki's fingers clenching the sheets on either side of Tony's head.

Tony was panting when they broke apart. "Are you going to take your shirt off?" He challenged Loki.

Loki sat up, tugging Tony's shirt off in one motion that had Tony lifting himself up and stretching out his arms to accommodate. Loki started to unbutton his shirt but Tony sat up as best he could, wrapping his legs around Loki's hips as he tugged at the buttons with fumbling hands. Loki shifted to make them more comfortable, reaching for Tony's belt buckle. He unzipped Tony's pants, reaching inside and curling his fingers around Tony's flushed cock. Tony's eyes fluttered shut for a moment. "Yours now," Tony said, setting a hand against Loki's chest.

Tony pulled away to yank his own pants off as Loki started to undo his own. Tony grabbed his wrist, bending down into Loki's lap and sucking on his freed cock. Loki's fingers gripped his hair, a breath stuttering from his lips. He was salty on Tony's tongue with a musk that Tony associated with good things. He applied pressure with his tongue and laved at the head, enjoying the groan Loki made. Tony pulled back, knowing if he really got into it he wouldn't stop until Loki had come.

Loki's hand slipped down to the bed. Tony held his gaze for a moment, breathless. "You still need to pull your pants off all the way," Tony said cheekily.

Loki huffed, tugging them off and tossing them at the floor. He paused for a second, then grabbed his and Tony's shirts from the sheets and threw them on the floor beside their pants. "Isn't that going to get wrinkled?" Tony teased.

"Then it will match with all of your clothes," Loki retorted.

"Hey," Tony scowled.

"Hey," Loki mocked him. He pushed Tony back down on the bed before he could complain further, kissing him so that Tony gave it up and let his hands wander down Loki's bare back instead. When they broke apart to catch their breaths, Loki turned his head to the side, panting

against Tony's shoulder.

Tony cupped his ass, kneading his thumb against it. "Last chance for rose petals."

Loki leaned back to look at him. Slow smiles crept onto their faces, both affectionate as they stared at the other in amusement. Tony took a deep breath. "You're going to have to let me get up to get the lube."

A flash of uncertainty crossed Loki's face, spoiling the tender look there. Tony smiled in reassurance. Loki shuffled off, his cock distracting Tony as it swayed in his lap. Tony tore his gaze away and yanked open his nightstand drawer.

He tossed a condom on the bed as he dug inside for the right lube. It crinkled as Loki tore it open, and a rush of anticipation swept through Tony. He'd always loved that sound. He pushed a couple of things aside before he found the right bottle.

Tony's grip around it tightened.

He knew Loki was uncertain, but he was too. It wasn't that he felt out of his depth or anything. He just wanted to get it right and there weren't any do overs.

"It's not too late to put on some Marvin Gaye," Loki said, gently teasing. Tony turned back around, smiling again.

Right. This was fun. They were fun. It was going to be fine.

"I'd have to stream it, and I don't want to listen to an ad for cat litter in the middle of it," Tony said.

"Cat litter doesn't do it for you?"

"Not really," Tony said. He settled down onto the bed, sitting up as he faced Loki. "So," he said. "I think it'd just be easier for both of us if I can see you." He wanted to be able to tell if Loki looked like something wasn't going right. "And I'd kind of like to prep myself," Tony added. As much as he loved the idea of Loki's fingers in him, he'd put some thought into it and figured this was better over how awkward that could be.

"Okay."

Tony flopped back against his pillows. The lube bottle snapped open. He let it sit on his fingers, warming up a bit. He couldn't bring himself to look at Loki just yet. He was actually blushing. He wasn't exactly shy about any of it, but he cared what Loki thought. Pulling his legs up, he reached for himself, easing his cock out of the way with one hand.

He knew just the right amount of pressure to apply as he circled the spot, easily sliding in to his first knuckle. The muscle clenched around his finger, tight. Tony let out a huff. He was more nervous than he thought.

He looked up to find Loki watching him with intrigue, pupils blown even wider. Tony felt his body instantly give in to his finger, as if it knew what was coming when he saw Loki's lust. He breathed out, lube sliding down his hand.

Loki leaned forward slightly as he spoke. "May I touch you?"

Tony blinked, unsure he'd heard that right. "Yes." Hell yes, that would make it so much better.

Loki's hand curled around his cock. Tony heard himself moan as Loki stroked him, his own finger thrusting impatiently. Loki's touch slackened, his gaze set on Tony.

Tony's warm brown eyes held Loki's gaze, his cheeks flushed and warm. When Loki leaned in to kiss him, Tony let go of himself to sling his arm around Loki's shoulders, drawing him in. Tony's lips were distracted but Loki took the lead. Tony melted into Loki's touch, urging him closer.

Tony just wanted to wrap his legs around Loki and draw him in. He wanted his hands to be free to explore. He wanted Loki inside him, and he wanted it now. Tony ignored the absence left by his finger as he withdrew. "Lo," Tony breathed, grasping his wrist. Loki met his gaze and held it. "I changed my mind. Would you work me open?"

Loki's eyes didn't leave Tony's as he thought. He pressed his lips together before reaching back behind him. Tony held his breath as Loki cracked open the bottle of lube. "Tell me if it's uncomfortable," Loki said firmly.

"I will," Tony breathed out. His face was on fire.

Loki's finger was cold as it slid inside. Tony moaned with the motion. Loki was slow, and careful. Far more careful than Tony would ever be. "Babe," Tony said. He grabbed Loki's wrist, urging him to move a little faster. Loki did, his eyes trained on Tony as Tony's own fell shut. Tony fell into the rhythm, spreading his legs further apart for Loki.

He felt Loki's lips meet his forehead and blinked his eyes open. "What?" Tony muttered.

"Nothing," Loki answered softly. Tony urged him to add another finger, holding no moan or gasp back as Loki explored. Soon enough Tony's patience was snapping.

"Lo," Tony muttered, pulling Loki's hand back. He pushed his own fingers back in, checking and convincing himself he was ready. "Please," he muttered, grasping the sheets instead. "Now." Loki leaned in and Tony sucked in a breath to hold.

Tony startled when he felt Loki's hand cradle the side of his face, Loki's thumb brushing over his chin as Tony's dark brown eyes found him.

Loki was calm. Collected. It was obvious he wanted Tony, from the flush on his cheeks to his straining cock. But it was the way Loki looked at him that got Tony. He could *feel* how Loki loved him, how important he was. It gave Tony a sense of security and protection he didn't know was possible to have. "You're sure," Loki checked.

"I'm going to explode if you don't," Tony answered. He was staring back at Loki with that same look though. Loki leaned in and kissed him, swallowing Tony's moan and tracing his tongue across Tony's bottom lip before letting go.

Loki hesitated a moment before guiding himself in, Tony's legs set on his shoulders. Tony let out an obscene sound as the broad tip slipped inside. Loki froze. "It's good," Tony mumbled, pulling him in. He dug his fingers into Loki's hair, cradling his head so he could watch Loki's expression as he slid into the heat of him. Loki pulled back a fraction before easing back in, his eyes starting to get that distant haze that Tony loved.

He groaned as Loki pushed back in. Tony pressed their lips together, working his tongue desperately inside. Loki stuttered for a moment. He pressed his forehead against Tony's, breath ragged. Tony whined as he started to pull back, beyond caring what it sounded like. "Tony," Loki started, then breathed out a laugh as Tony started to tug Loki back against him, tilting his hips just

to get a fraction of Loki back inside him. Tony forced his eyes open, oblivious to how utterly wrecked he looked. He did see the shift in Loki's expression though, the adoration mixed with something Tony dared to describe as quiet pride.

Loki grinned, his grip on Tony's hips easing up for a moment. He sunk in slowly, Tony's eyes falling shut again as his body stretched to accommodate Loki. Again when Loki pulled back Tony acted like it was the end of the world, rocking his hips and making sounds of protest. Loki's hand vanished from his hip and cradled the side of his face again, his thumb brushing over Tony's cheek. Tony stared at him with yearning, trying to understand. Loki kissed his forehead again. He leaned down beside Tony's ear. "Be patient, Tony," he said, though it sounded remarkably fond. "I haven't even been in all the way yet."

Tony's eyes widened. "You need to relax," Loki said, grasping Tony's cock, tugging in a way that made Tony groan and clench around him again.

"Don't, I'm going to," Tony breathed out, "come if you keep that up." He tried to will himself to relax against the bed, but now that the moment was here, he was aching for it. Loki let go of his cock, still inside him. He didn't move, instead kissing the corner of Tony's mouth. Loki smattered Tony's lips with small, chaste kisses until Tony relaxed, kissing him back. Tony had an acute sense of the thick cock spreading him open. It was hard to ignore, even with Loki's tender kisses.

Tony's arms went limp against Loki as he gave in to the overwhelming sensation. Loki's tongue traced his, languid and easy. Tony wasn't expecting it when Loki's cock sank deeper, his hand squeezing Tony's hip, until his balls pressed against Tony. Somewhere, Tony heard his voice break in a moan. Tony's leg started to slide off to the side. Cold air met Tony's lips. Loki leaned back, grasping Tony's hips and adjusting them to change the angle.

"Loki," Tony mumbled, almost pleading. Loki found his lips again, but it was fleeting. Loki leaned back, setting a slow pace that made Tony's head spin. It was too fast and too slow at the same time. "Lo." Loki's grip tightened as Tony said his name. "Loki." Tony pulled Loki against him, his arms weak as all of his attention was elsewhere. He loved Loki, and he was finally having this moment, and it was utterly different than how Tony'd ever pictured it, but no less perfect.

Loki's hips snapped against his, then paused, slowly drawing out. Tony wasn't giving him much room to move, trying to drawing him in with every limb. Loki buried his face in Tony's neck. His warm breath came in short gasps against Tony's overheated skin.

Loki's usual smoky, pine cologne scent was fading away to something that was just him, sweaty and intimately human. Tony grasped at Loki's hair as his hips rocked against Tony's, the friction of Loki's torso against his straining cock too much of a tease. Loki was as deep as he could possibly go, but it still wasn't enough. Tony wanted him so desperately that nothing was going to be enough.

Loki used what leverage he could to withdraw, driving back in. Tony was gasping for breath, clinging to him as every muscle tensed. A bead of sweat rolled down Loki's back as he breathed against Tony's neck. "Tony," he muttered, angling Tony's compliant hips again and inadvertently striking his prostate.

Tony cried out. Loki struck the spot again. Tony blinked, eyelashes wet. As Loki drove into the core of him, Tony held on, mentally clamoring for more, blinking away tears as the rhythm shuddered through him and the bed.

Loki stilled suddenly, then went boneless against Tony, catching his breath with his face tucked into Tony's neck. Tony combed his fingers through Loki's sweat slicked hair. Loki reached

between them, grabbing the base of Tony's cock. His thumb stroked upwards, and he hadn't even reached the head before Tony was coming between them, vision gone.

Tony was dimly aware of Loki pulling out. His legs fell slack against the bed. He heard movement but didn't think about it. "Tony?" Loki asked, startled. Tony squinted his eyes open at him. Loki's eyebrows were pinched tight, alert. "Are you okay?" Loki's eyes swept over his body.

"Yeah," Tony managed to say. He reached for Loki's hand.

"You're crying," Loki said as Tony drew Loki's hand towards him. His chest was splattered with his own come, but he didn't care.

Tony wasn't going to attempt to sit up. "Yeah. I don't know why. It's a good thing," Tony said, smiling for him. Loki paused but Tony opened his arms wide, beckoning Loki towards him. Loki leaned in and Tony pulled him down, holding Loki to his chest. He tucked his head against Loki's. "I love you." Tony didn't think he'd meant it more to anyone in his life.

Loki relaxed against him then. He was heavier than he looked. Loki's fingers wandered along his skin, overstimulating. "I love you too." Loki moved so that he could look at Tony's face, the bed rustling with the motion. He smiled. "Are you certain you wouldn't have liked that better if I'd had a rose between my teeth?"

Tony smiled, tilting his head back. "Yeah," he breathed out. He loved the smartass. "Yeah."

Chapter 35

When Tony woke up in the bright morning light, he immediately rolled over, stretching his neck against the pillow as he looked for Loki.

Loki was in a deep sleep. His hair was half waved over his face and his hand was in a limp half curl against the mattress. Tony broke into a smile.

Memories from the night before came flooding back, bringing desire with them. Tony drew the blanket in closer to himself. He was still smiling like a sap. He debated on waking Loki up but ultimately decided he'd feel bad. That may have been influenced by the realization that grumpy morning Loki could be a possibility.

Tony rolled onto his back. He couldn't lay in bed with longing until Loki woke up. He shuffled out of bed, stretching as he walked into the kitchen. Tony made coffee and decided that he was hungry. Tony pulled open the cabinet and stared at a tin of oatmeal and a box of cereal. They weren't appealing.

Tony sighed, setting his mug down. He didn't have pancake mix or anything like that. Maybe he'd coax Loki into going out for breakfast. Tony finished his cup of coffee, then made another. He paced back to the bedroom. Loki was still asleep.

Tony slumped against the door frame. He wasn't pouting. Definitely not. He was just tired.

He went into the living room, intending to watch TV. An ambulance siren passed by the windows. A couple of minutes later Loki padded in, rubbing his face. "Morning sunshine," Tony said. Loki's expression softened as he spotted Tony on the couch. "Coffee's in the kitchen." Loki started for it, Tony getting up to follow. "I was thinking, do you want to go out for breakfast?"

Loki fumbled with the coffee maker. "I do not intend to make myself presentable for at least another hour," he said, yawning.

Tony was hungry now and he really didn't want what was in his cabinets. "We could go get donuts and bring them back here," Tony offered. Once the words left his mouth, he'd made up his mind. That's what he wanted for breakfast. He walked up to Loki.

Loki rubbed his eye as the coffee pot gurgled. "I want to take a shower before I do anything."

"Together?" Tony asked hopefully, leaning against the counter beside the coffee pot. Loki smiled but avoided eye contact. His fingertips rested against his hairline.

"I'm not quite awake enough for that," Loki answered. He filled his coffee mug, stepping back.

"Are you sure?" Tony asked.

"Yes," Loki said, pulling open the fridge and taking out a carton of cream. Tony really liked the idea, but he was picking up on a needing space vibe from Loki. Which fine, fair enough.

"What if I run down to Randy's and you get a shower?" Loki looked up from his coffee. "What kind do you want?"

"Chocolate," Loki decided after a moment. Tony smiled. As he walked past Loki, he leaned up to peck his cheek.

“I’ll be back,” Tony said with a cheeky little smile, heading back to the bedroom to throw on some jeans. Loki watched him from the doorframe of the kitchen as Tony tugged on his jacket to leave. He couldn’t even begin to describe the contentment he felt, knowing that Loki was there. More images of the night before flashed through his mind as he reached for his keys.

Tony decided to walk the few blocks to the donut shop. The cold air would do him some good.

Loki was watching TV when Tony got back. His hair was wet. He’d dressed in one of Tony’s hoodies and a pair of pajama bottoms that hit above his ankles. Tony set the box of donuts on the coffee table and went into the kitchen to get himself another mug. Then he settled down on the couch with Loki, grabbing a glazed donut.

Loki pulled up Tony’s recordings and started ones of the shows they’d always talked about at work. It’d aired the night before. Tony relaxed against the couch as the theme music started.

Tony stole a sidelong glance. Loki definitely wasn’t fully awake yet, if the sleepy look in his eyes was anything to go by. He had crumbs on the corner of his mouth that he hadn’t noticed. He sort of looked like a content cat, but as usual his long fingers caught Tony’s attention as they angled the donut for another bite. Tony found a smile sneaking back onto his face. He forced himself to look back at the TV before Loki noticed.

It was a great episode, but every time the commercials came on and Loki started to fast forward, Tony found himself staring again.

He could not get the night before to stop flashing through his head. He could not get the desire to repeat it out of his head either. Loki’s laugh caught his attention and Tony found himself enamored with the sound as he caught back up with what was on the TV.

When episode ended, Loki held the remote, not choosing anything new. “We should go to karaoke some time,” Loki mused.

“Really?”

Loki glanced over at him, eyes bright. “I think you’d like it.” Tony didn’t think of himself as a singer. “Jake’s always reminded me a little of you,” Loki said.

“So you think that means I’d like to go karaoke?” Tony asked. Loki shrugged. Actually, Loki had a point. Tony kind of liked the idea. They’d probably have a lot of fun. “That can be our next date,” Tony said. He rested his arm against the back of the couch as he turned towards Loki.

Loki yawned, setting the remote down and reaching for his coffee. It shouldn’t have been arousing to watch him sip from a mug, but it was.

“You look gorgeous,” Tony said.

Loki brushed his hair back behind his ear with some amusement. “Don’t I always?” He quipped.

“Well yeah. We’re definitely a good looking power couple,” Tony said. “So, uh.” Loki sipped his coffee, listening. “I was kind of thinking that we’ve toyed with the idea of the lingerie in my bedroom, but we’re both free today and—” He shouldn’t have felt weird or bashful asking, but he did. “I thought maybe I could wear it and you could take pictures and we could see where that leads?”

Tony knew exactly where he wanted it to lead. Loki swallowed. He'd gone a little wide eyed, and he didn't react fast enough to hide his yearning. Loki's breath stuttered as he breathed in before he answered as level as possible, "I like that idea."

"Great." Tony smiled, relieved. His jeans were starting to feel a little too tight. "Now maybe?"

Loki set his coffee mug down, almost spilling it as it rattled on the table. "Alright."

Tony had the feeling they were both playing it cool, which gave him a sense of pride, really. He lead the way to the bedroom, then pulled open his dresser drawer as Loki stood beside him. "My good camera's in the hall closet," Tony said. Loki went to go get it. He returned before Tony could even take off his shirt.

"Should I make the bed?" Tony asked, glancing back over his shoulder. The blankets were strewn everywhere. It looked worse than usual.

"Leave it," Loki said. The decisiveness in his tone that caught Tony's attention. Tony looked at the bed and then back to him. "It looks...good," Loki said.

Tony raised his eyebrows, smiling. "I think the word you wanted to use was debauched." Loki looked away, busted. Tony laughed, tugging his shirt off. It was a lot easier to pull on the corset this time, and he left the ribbon undone as he switched his pants for a thong. Loki stepped forward.

"Let me help you with the back," he said.

Right. Tony could ask him for help. He felt silly not thinking of that. He turned so his back was facing Loki. The ribbon pulled taut as Loki grabbed the ends. Loki pulled slowly, carefully synching each row, the ribbon hissing as it sank against his skin. Tony felt himself flushing. Loki's breath drifted across his neck, his hands never losing their steady threading motion. Tony was hard and straining at the fabric already. Anticipation swept through him as he felt a bow being tied.

Loki's hands set on his shoulders, turning him around. Loki smiled at him before his attention drifted to Tony's hair. He ran his fingers through it, combing the top so that it was neatly disheveled. "Perfect," Loki muttered.

Tony set his hands on Loki's biceps, smiling, half nervous and half proud. "I don't even have the robe on yet."

"Do you need to?" Loki asked, almost teasing.

Tony twisted his lips, thinking. "You wear it."

Loki seemed surprised by the request. He thought for a moment, then his expression dimmed. "Tony," he said, apologetic. "I'd love to wear it for you, but taking these kinds of photos of me carries a risk with my position at work. I know you wouldn't do anything with them, but if someone got the flash drive somehow or—"

"—Hey," Tony said, pressing his hand against Loki's chest. "I didn't say anything about taking your photo." He'd always figured as much anyway. Tony took them of himself because he liked to. He didn't expect Loki to do the same thing. "I'd just like you to wear it."

Loki's smile pulled up to one side, pleased. It was pretty damn clear to Tony that he liked the idea.

He set the camera down, unzipping the hoodie and dropping it on the bed. Tony openly ogled him as he slid the sweatpants down off his hips. As he saw that Loki's cock was half hard, he felt smug

too. Tony handed him the robe.

The sheer black fabric barely covered Loki's hips. It flared at the back so the smooth curves of his ass peeked out under the hem. Loki tied the belt shut.

"Here," Tony said, reaching for the V of the robe. He eased it open so that it hung slightly open against Loki's chest while keeping the belt in place. A soft breath fell from Loki's lips. Tony reluctantly let go. He took a step backwards, the back of his knee brushing against the mattress.

Loki cradled the rather large camera in both hands, right in front of the spot on his chest Tony had just exposed. "Is this something couples usually do?" He asked with self-deprecating humor and a hint of self-consciousness.

Tony sank down onto the bed. "Maybe." He grinned. "Why not?"

Loki licked his lips. The camera beeped as he turned it on.

"Make sure you get my good side," Tony told him.

Loki glanced up from the camera's LCD display. "Which one's that?"

"All of them."

Loki grinned, shaking his head. He snapped a candid photo of Tony smiling back at him. "How would you like to do this?"

"You've got the camera," Tony said. "You tell me." He set his hands behind him on the bed, leaning back.

Loki shifted the camera slightly. He stared at Tony like he couldn't quite believe that he was there, and at the same time, Tony recognized Loki's thoughtful, analytical side at work. "Sit in the middle of the bed," Loki said.

Tony crawled back to the center. "Lay down on your stomach and face me." Tony did, setting his elbows on the bed and propping his head in his hands. Loki knelt down, snapping the photo at his height. The weight on his cock as Tony pressed it into the mattress was tempting. Loki snapped a couple of shots. He was quiet for a moment, as was the camera shutter. "Roll onto your back."

Tony did, luxuriating in the soft blankets against his skin. His cock peeked out from under the thong with the motion. Tony tucked himself back in, not passing up the opportunity to stroke himself. Then he let his arms fall to the mattress and waited.

"Sit up," Loki said, throat a little dry. "I want to make sure to get a few shots of the whole corset."

Tony flaunted his ass as he sat up, tilting his hips and making a show out of rising from the mattress.

Tony looked back over his shoulder at Loki. He listened for the shutter sound effect. Tony didn't have to fake the grin on his lips. Although he couldn't see Loki's face entirely, he knew that Loki was flustered. It felt good.

Loki kept his eye to the viewfinder. "Move towards me a little."

Tony shuffled towards him on his knees. He stared into the lens, acutely aware of how intimate it was. This was an entirely different experience from taking them on his own. The camera snapped a

few shots in quick succession. Then it went silent. Loki didn't move the camera from his face.

Tony reached out, grasping the belt of the robe. "Come here." The belt was taut in his hand. Loki lowered the camera by a fraction. A dark flush had crawled across his cheekbone. "Unless you have another photo you want."

Loki lowered the camera down to his chest but didn't seem to know what to do with it. Tony eased it from his hands, carefully setting it down on the floor without losing his grip on Loki's belt. "Come here," Tony said, tugging it. The belt started to come undone but Loki fell in towards it, straddling Tony as he grasped the side of Tony's face and kissed him with hunger.

I fucking love this, Tony thought, hooking his legs around Loki's waist and grinding against him. Loki was panting hard when he pulled back. "I didn't expect taking them to be so alluring," Loki mumbled. Tony felt like laughing. He combed his fingers into Loki's damp hair.

"I'm going to have to buy a new set to change it up."

"I'll buy it for you," Loki said, kissing Tony fervently. Tony wrapped his arms around Loki's shoulders, the robe coming undone between their chests. The friction between against Tony's hips was unbearable.

"Babe," Tony breathed, trying to catch his attention. Loki moaned in response. He released Tony's lips to start a trail down his neck instead. "I want you in me." His arms fell from Loki's shoulders as Loki started to sit up.

He was still trying to catch his breath, his dark eyes set on Tony. Thinking.

Tony's heart skipped a few beats, but he was hopeful. Loki blinked. He started to pull away and Tony's chest tightened, but then he realized Loki was going to pull open the nightstand drawer.

Loki was less certain as he coated his fingers with lube, looking to Tony for direction. Tony considered for a moment.

"You want to get a good view of the corset?" Tony asked, rolling onto his back. If he preened as he did, so be it.

"How will I know if—" Tony reached for Loki's wrist.

"—I'll tell you."

Loki's finger sank in easily. It didn't take much coaxing to work him open. Tony didn't have the patience anyway. He'd been horny from the moment he woke up. "Now," Tony insisted. He pulled the thong's string aside even further, inviting him.

Tony let out a needy moan when Loki's cock just brushed the rim. There was a pause. "Don't make me beg," Tony complained, though it sounded like pleading. Loki huffed. Then Tony heard the lube bottle crack open again. Before he could protest, Loki's slicked cock was sliding in. Tony grasped at the sheets.

Loki's fingers tangled into the ribbon of the corset, grasping them into a bunch. "Are you always this impatient?"

"Yes!" The word was knocked from him as Loki sank in deeper. Tony tilted his hips, desperate to be filled. Even when Loki's hips settled against him, his insides stretched around the thick cock, Tony felt like there should be more. He didn't have time to think on it though because Loki was

starting to move.

Loki's hold on the corset caused the fabric to pull against his ribcage with each thrust, amplifying them. Tony thought about making some smartass comment about how they should've tied it tighter, but then he forgot. Loki was hitting him right where he wanted it.

Tony came with a shout, writhing against the bed.

He fell down from the brief high. His hands ached where they'd clasped the sheets. Closing his eyes, Tony focused on the rhythm behind him. It wasn't as good as before he'd had his orgasm, but he liked it in the sense that he could enjoy Loki coming apart around him.

There was still something measured and cautious in Loki's thrusts. Tony looked back over his shoulder. Loki's gaze met him at the motion. He was more lucid than Tony expected him to be. He was thinking too much, probably.

Tony pushed himself up on his elbows and Loki paused, bending down and adjusting until their lips met. It was more tender than Tony expected. Tony let himself sink back down to the pillow and bury his face in it, Loki's lips trailing down his neck. Tony clenched around him, letting out a soft groan. He worked his hips until Loki started again, Loki's hold on the ribbons going slack as he adjusted the angle.

Tony turned his head to the side. He praised Loki, telling him how gorgeous he was until Loki mumbled something Tony couldn't make out.

Loki came with a gasp, withdrawing a moment later. He ran his hand over Tony's ass. Tony rolled onto his side, casting a lazy glance towards Loki.

Loki got off the bed. Tony thought he was just tossing the condom in the trash, but then he knelt down to the floor, looking for something. He stood up holding the camera.

Loki slid in beside him on the bed, flipping through the photos in the display. Tony sat up with him, leaning his head towards Loki as they sat with their backs to the headboard. Tony hadn't realized how lusty his face had looked in the photos. The light was pretty unflattering on the next photo Loki went to. "Delete that one," he said.

"Why?" Loki seemed fond of the image. Tony sighed.

"I don't like it."

Loki's thumb flicked over to a button, deleting it. The next few were alright, but Tony felt slightly more aware of how he looked in these than the last ones he'd taken. "The corset's very flattering on you," Loki said. Tony knew it was, but he enjoyed the compliment all the same.

"I think you did a number on the seams," Tony commented. Loki glanced over at him, then smiled softly, sorry but not quite sorry. The corset was gaping out from Tony's chest and poking his side at an odd angle. "I think you're going to have to help me out of it," Tony admitted. "The knot's tight."

Loki set the camera down on the covers. Tony moved so that his back was to Loki. He felt a slight tug at the ribbon as Loki picked at the knot. "I didn't think I'd done it so tight," Loki said, finally working it free.

"I think it happened when you grabbed the ribbons," Tony said, playful. He felt a row slide free. "Which, I'm not complaining, by the way."

“Good to know,” Loki answered, the ribbon making a soft sound as it was pulled through the hooks. Tony hadn’t realized how compressed his chest had felt until Loki got to the last couple of rows. Loki dropped the ribbon in a handful beside Tony’s hip. Then he peeled the lace fabric back from Tony’s skin, withdrawing it gently and setting it to the side.

Loki ran his fingers over the pink lines in Tony’s skin, sending a shiver up Tony’s spine. He returned to a particular spot, circling an extra sensitive point until Tony shivered and dropped himself back against Loki’s chest, forcing Loki to catch him. Loki’s arms wrapped around him as he hooked his chin over Tony’s shoulder. He was still wearing the robe. “You’re a little pink,” he said, hand seeking down Tony’s chest until it found an indent and began to soothe the skin there.

“I know.” Tony let his eyes fall shut, although his mind was back online. “It was fun.”

Loki held him for a while longer, drawing lines with his fingers over the marks. He let go and the warmth at Tony’s shoulder vanished before it was replaced by Loki’s hands, squeezing the tough muscle and digging his thumbs in. Tony let out an inhuman sound. “A massage,” Tony said. “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“Is that a problem?” Loki asked, but it sounded like he already knew the answer.

“Not if you’re fine with me being spoiled,” Tony said. He rubbed his face as Loki’s fingers dug in at his shoulder blades. “Or maybe you’re just showing off how awesome you are. Is that it?”

“That’s definitely it,” Loki confirmed.

Tony grinned, staring down at his lap. After a moment, he reached for the ribbon. He threaded it through his fingers. “You’re going to have to get a turn with the corset sometime,” he said.

“If it stays in tact long enough.”

Tony beamed. “That’s the kind of dirty talk I want to hear,” he praised Loki.

Loki leaned forward, his hands pausing for a moment. “A few of the rings on the back are crooked.” Tony reached behind him, feeling for the corset. He snagged the end of the fabric and dragged it towards him.

Sure enough, a few of the thin metal rings that hung from the sides of the fabric were crooked but functional. “It’s better this way,” Tony said. That familiar fix it feeling appeared, but Tony pushed it aside. There was something raunchy about the corset being like that, and he loved it. “You’re going to buy me some new stuff anyway,” he said, hopeful.

“Mhmm.” Loki squeezed his shoulders before letting go. “I’m going to get another donut.”

As he started to get off the bed, Tony hurried to follow, ripping the thong off. “Actually, just bring the box,” Tony said. Loki nodded. Tony went to open the nightstand drawer to clean up when the disarray of the room caught his attention. The floor was littered with their clothes. The bed was a rumpled mess of blankets, his lingerie scattered and in pieces. Tony let out a deep breath.

This felt right.

When Loki came back, Tony leaned in and kissed his cheek. “Hmm?”

“You,” Tony said. He plucked the closest donut from the box.

“You were distracting me to get that one,” Loki accused him. He was wrong, but Tony didn’t

correct him. Instead he gloated as he bit in, enjoying Loki's scowl more than the chocolate.

Chapter 36

On Tuesday night, they video chatted in the evening, and Loki told him he was going to some huge work gala thing with Thor that weekend. It was out of town, and Loki would be back too late to see him on Sunday.

“Would you like me to come?” Tony offered.

A peculiar, almost skeptical look slid across Loki’s face before he answered. “It is literally nothing but sitting around dinner tables listening to speeches and rubbing elbows.” He frowned. “You’ll be bored, Tony. I have people I have to speak with, and we wouldn’t be able to hang out. It’s going to be exactly like one of your father’s fundraisers.”

Tony had complained about those to Loki before, even though he hadn’t been to one since he’d made an ass of himself at fourteen during one. “But you’re going to be gone all weekend,” Tony said. He wasn’t trying to be petulant, even if he was coming across that way.

Loki gave him a small, indulgent smile. “It is not as if this will be the first weekend we’ve been apart. I’ll still call you that evening.”

“I know.” Tony was feeling slightly self-conscious, so he changed the subject. He still spent the week moping about it though, even if he denied it.

When Saturday rolled around, Tony hung out with Happy, and Happy was not the kind of guy to take his crap with a sympathetic ear ad nauseam. He talked Tony into going boxing. And it was difficult, but it challenged Tony and left him in a good mood. That evening Tony still missed Loki when he saw him on webcam. Loki spent most of their conversation ranting about the gala though, and Tony found himself humming at the right places and thinking of upgrades for Dummy while Loki eviscerated the key speaker for the third time.

Tony ended up going out with Happy and seeing a basketball game on Sunday too, so it turned out to be a pretty good weekend. He was getting ready to go to bed when Loki called.

“Hey Lo,” Tony said, pulling back the covers. “I was just getting ready to go to bed. What’s up?”

“Oh,” Loki said. “I just got back home.”

It was late, later than Loki was usually awake. He knew Loki wouldn’t want to be on the line for long. “Did everything go okay on your trip?”

“Yes. We accomplished everything we’d needed to, and Thor and I managed to fit in some sight seeing before we left. It was actually quite nice. We took some pictures and found a burger place for dinner you would’ve liked.”

“Okay. Good. Well—”

“—What did you do today?”

Tony sat up against the headboard. “Happy and I went to see a game. It was pretty good.”

“Did you do anything else?”

“Nope. Not really.”

“Did they win the game?”

Tony blinked. He knew Loki wasn't really interested in basketball. “Yeah, they did.” Slowly, Tony realized that Loki just didn't want to get off the phone. “Hey, you know, we could go get dinner tomorrow after work if you want.”

“I'd like that.” Loki was quiet for a moment. “I know that you said you were going to go bed. Good night, Tony. I love you.”

The sincerity of it tugged at Tony's heart strings. “Good night, Lo. I love you too.”

Tony heard Loki's breath against the phone, but he wasn't going to play the hang up first game. He said goodbye and set his phone on the nightstand.

Tony pulled the comforter up over him. It was nice to know that Loki had missed him.

At dinner the next day, they joked and snarked and had their usual fun. When they went out to the parking lot, Tony dug out his keys, expecting Loki to go to his own car. Suddenly, he felt Loki's hand on the small of his back and looked up in mild surprise.

Loki's gaze had gone soft, wistful almost. He smiled as Tony made eye contact. “See you later, Tony,” he said in his usual tone. He leaned down for a kiss and Tony met him halfway, desire burning through him as Loki's soft lips pressed to his. As the heels of his shoes set on the ground, Tony blinked to find Loki watching him with fondness.

Tony twirled the keys around his finger, not losing eye contact with Loki. He felt like there was something Loki wanted to say, but he had no idea what it was. Tony blinked. Loki's hands disappeared into his pockets, but he didn't say anything. “I feel like—” Tony squinted. “There's something you want to tell me?”

“Maybe I'm planning something,” Loki said with a devilish grin. He stepped back. “Keep your weekend open.”

“Like I wouldn't,” Tony said.

Loki smiled back at him and started for the car. “Loki,” Tony called after him. Loki paused, then looked back over his shoulder. “What is it?”

“It's a surprise,” Loki said.

Tony frowned even as his eyes lit up. Loki waved, vanishing past a silver minivan and deeper into the parking lot.

Tony found the way to his own car. He sat at the wheel for a moment, scratching his beard as he smirked. Whatever it was, he trusted Loki to make it good.

Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony tried to weasel clues out of Loki about the surprise, but his attempts only amused Loki. The only thing he knew for certain was that Loki would meet him at his apartment on Friday after work and he was supposed to keep his weekend free.

When Tony got home, he settled into the window seat at the front of his apartment, watching. Waiting. He did have his laptop open, but he hardly paid it any attention.

The sun was still out, but that was the only indication of spring besides a couple of cracked and frostbitten flower buds on the trees. Tony kept checking the time. If Loki left work on time, he would've already had time to arrive at Tony's apartment. If he left work on time and went to his apartment afterwards, then he would've had to be there for a few minutes and left already to arrive by now. Tony huffed at his computer screen.

It still seemed a little early to send Loki a text demanding his surprise already.

Tony went to the kitchen and got a soda. He returned to his perch, noting every passerby that wandered down the sidewalk. Tony spotted Loki's car the instant it appeared on the far end of the street. Tony threw his laptop shut and sat up straight.

He watched Loki parallel park across the street, studying him as he waited for a car to pass so that he could walk across the road. His hair was pulled back and slicked into a low ponytail. He was wearing a navy suit, along with a tan patterned tie that Tony recognized. He was also wearing his sunglasses, so it was hard to tell what his expression was beneath the mirrored surface. There was no package in Loki's hand. No bag slung over his shoulder. Tony leaned closer to the glass, wondering if it was something on the flash drive. That was his top theory.

Loki had promised it would be a good surprise, whatever it was.

Tony dashed out of the seat as Loki started for the stairs of the apartment complex.

He waited as his doorbell buzzed. He didn't want to seem like he'd been waiting at the door. Tony straightened his shirt and checked his hair. Then he pulled open his apartment door and went to the building's front door to let Loki in.

Loki grinned as Tony pulled open the door. Tony stared at his own distorted reflection in Loki's sunglasses. "Hello, Tony."

"There's no sun in here," Tony said, stepping back and gesturing Loki towards his door. Loki folded his sunglasses and slid them into his suit jacket, still grinning.

"What is it?" Tony demanded the moment his apartment door closed behind them.

Loki's eyes were bright. He leaned down, raising his eyebrows as he smirked at Tony. "Would you like to know?"

Tony grabbed his suit, tugging Loki towards him. Loki laughed as Tony wrapped his arms around Loki like he was afraid he'd run off without telling him. "Tell me you tease."

“As you wish.” Loki’s set his hands on Tony’s shoulders, still smirking. “Pack an overnight bag. We’re not coming back until Sunday.”

Tony stared at him, too many possibilities filling his head to pick one. “Where are we going?”

“I know you were disappointed that you couldn’t come along with me last weekend, and I thought it was time we took a trip of our own.”

“Are you serious?!” Tony exclaimed, mouth dropping open before he broke into a smile.

Loki’s arm slid around his shoulder. “It would’ve been no fun to have Thor along with us,” he said, holding Tony against him. “Unless of course, you wanted a third wheel? I suppose I could call—”

“—Tell me where we’re going,” Tony interrupted his teasing.

“I rented a room at a resort an hour and a half from here. Hopefully the weather will be nicer there than it is here this weekend.” Loki grinned down at him, eyes still shining. “Shall we get going?”

Tony reluctantly let go, Loki’s long arms sliding from him. “Right. Packing.” Tony started for the hall closet. “What do I need to pack besides clothes?”

“There is a pool,” Loki said. “If you want to bring a swimsuit.”

“Nice.” Tony grabbed a gray duffel bag and started for his room. He was expecting Loki to trail after him. Instead, Loki settled down on the couch. Dummy rolled up to him, and Loki patted him like a cat. Tony hurried to his room. Loki hadn’t said he had to rush, but Tony was excited.

He threw his favorite jeans in his bag, along with the rest of his usual clothes. Tony glanced at the nightstand. He tapped the top of his dresser as he thought.

Why not?

It’d be better to bring it than not. Stuff could always stay in the bag. Tony unzipped the duffel bag’s side compartment as he walked over to his nightstand. He tossed a bottle of lube and a handful of condoms into the bag when something at the back of the drawer caught his attention.

Loki might appreciate it. Tony debated for a few more seconds before tossing it in the bag.

“Ready?” Loki asked as Tony came into the living room with his bag. Tony smiled at him as he nodded. “Let’s go.” Tony locked up his apartment, stopping himself from bouncing on his feet he was so excited.

It was dark out when they arrived at the resort, but from the moment they checked in Tony was impressed. “This place is *really* nice, Lo,” Tony said as they walked to their room. The marble floors and modern fixtures were elegant. It looked like something out of a magazine.

Loki was pleased with Tony’s reaction but didn’t gloat. “I’ve been wanting to come here since I heard about it.” He glanced at Tony and then added, “Consider this my treat.”

“Lo,” Tony said, not entirely sure how he was supposed to respond to that. Loki set his hand on Tony’s shoulder.

“Let me spoil you,” he said, smiling.

Tony found himself grinning back and then looking forward with determination. “I’m going to take your word on that.”

“As you should,” Loki said, stopping at their door.

The suite was huge. Tony immediately flopped down on the king sized bed. He rolled over and stretched his arms. This was *awesome*. Loki picked up a long, laminated piece of paper that Tony assumed was the TV channel list. Tony rolled onto his side. “I’m ordering dinner. What would you like?” Loki asked.

Loki extended the laminated piece of paper, and Tony realized it had been a menu for room service. He skimmed it. “Pizza.”

Loki picked up the room phone. Tony stared at him as he ordered, infatuated. He didn’t know what he’d been expecting from Loki’s surprise, but a weekend trip hadn’t crossed his mind. It meant even more though that Loki had recognized that he had wanted to come with him before and done this to make up for it. “What?” Loki asked, half-smiling at Tony. He hadn’t realized that Loki had hung up.

“Nothing.” Tony sat up. “What is there to do here?”

“There’s a winery,” Loki said, stretching his arms over his head. He loosened the knot in his tie. “And some shops and nightlife in the town here. I thought we could wander around there tomorrow and go to whatever strikes our fancy.” Loki rubbed his eye. “I’m exhausted tonight though. Work was busy. I hope you don’t mind watching a movie in bed.” Loki unfastened his tie, setting it beside the phone.

Tony’d had a long day at work too. “Not at all,” he said. “Let’s find something to watch.”

They were five minutes into their movie when their food arrived. Tony had no trouble eating pizza in bed, but Loki had to be a little more delicate with the pasta he’d ordered. Tony glanced over just as he licked white sauce from his top lip.

Tony held his breath, forcing himself to look back at the screen. He finished his pizza quickly. He tried not to watch Loki from the corner of his eye, but he found himself doing it again. And again. As soon as Loki was done eating, Tony drew himself in against Loki’s side. Loki wrapped his arm around Tony’s shoulders.

He smelled good. He smelled like that spicy cologne that he hadn’t worn since Tony had worked with him. Tony let his eyes fall shut. Really, he liked this cologne a lot. “Do you want to go to bed?” Loki’s voice was sympathetic.

Tony blinked, then turned to find Loki watching him. “No! Uh, actually I’m just not into this movie.” Tony rubbed his nose. “Are you?”

“I—it’s okay,” Loki decided. “We can find something else.”

Tony thought for a moment, pressing his lips together. He knew what he wanted. He slipped out from under Loki’s arm. Tony crawled into Loki’s lap, locking eyes with Loki. A slow, pleased smile crawled across Loki’s lips. Tony leaned in, then paused, right before their lips barely touched. Loki’s warm breath drifted against his skin. Tony was spinning through one liners in his head when Loki swept in and brought their lips together, fingers raking up through Tony’s hair as his tongue teased its way inside Tony’s mouth.

Tony groaned, grabbing Loki’s shoulders as he let Loki in. The starched fabric pulled taut. A

button snapped open at Loki's throat as Tony's grip tightened. Loki gasped, letting his head fall back against the headboard as he caught his breath. Tony kissed his cheek, then smiled as Loki's eyes fell shut and Tony kissed his cheekbone, then forehead.

Loki seemed so content, relaxed, and bewilderingly trusting compared to how it'd been when they'd started dating. Tony wanted him now just as much as he'd wanted him then. Probably even more.

Loki's hands had settled around Tony's hips. He rubbed his fingers in small circles against Tony's lower back. Tony brushed a loose strand of hair on Loki's forehead back behind his ear. He loved this man. He also loved sex, so it was a win-win really.

Tony reached for Loki's belt, the metal jangling as he undid the clasp. Loki flushed, taking a deep breath as his fingers curled around the comforter and squeezed instead. Tony brushed his fingers against Loki's neck, sliding them back behind his shirt collar. "You alright?" He asked, unsure from the way Loki was gripping the covers.

"Yeah," Loki breathed out. "But what're—" His eyebrows flinched. "You planning on?"

Tony hadn't really had a plan. He was more going off impulse, so before he could overthink it he just said what he wanted. "I was thinking I'd like it if I could get you off and watch you come and then have you to go down on me."

Loki stared at him for a moment. Then he broke into a coy grin. "Okay."

"What's amusing?" Tony asked, finding himself mirroring Loki's smile even though he had no idea why.

Loki licked his lips. "I like that plan," Loki said, breath not completely caught.

Maybe it wasn't amusement but excitement. Tony hid his own amused smile as he slotted their lips together, tugging the button on Loki's pants free. Loki moaned, running his fingers through Tony's hair. Tony absolutely loved the way he did that, like he couldn't get enough of Tony. Tony drew Loki's cock free, curling his fingers around the warm skin. He tugged Loki's shirt collar open a little more, releasing Loki's lips to kiss down his neck instead. It was a brilliant idea. Loki's breathy moans rang in Tony's ears.

Loki didn't hold back a single sound. Every pant and moan encouraged Tony, fueling his own arousal. Tony slowly slid the top couple of buttons free, slipping his hand inside. He traced Loki's peaked nipple. Loki sucked in a sharp breath. His cock twitched in Tony's hand. Tony released it to hold Loki's waist in one hand as the other held the shirt back so his tongue could circle the hard nub. Loki's skin was burning up beneath his shirt. Tony grasped Loki's cock as he sucked at his collar bone, leaving his shirt half opened so that one nipple was left bare, slick and wet.

Tony's thumb brushed through a bead of pre come. He leaned back, Loki's gaze snapping to him as he took his thumb in his mouth and sucked. There was hardly any distance between them, crammed as they were together against the headboard, Loki watching Tony in unabashed awe. Tony grinned, kissing Loki so he could catch the faint taste of himself. When he pulled away, Loki was watching him with soft eyes, yearning. Tony just grinned. He'd always loved the rush of turning someone on, but especially Loki.

"Tony," Loki complained when Tony failed to move. "When did you become such a tease?"

"I'm a tease?" Tony asked. Loki rolled his eyes before grabbing Tony and drawing him into a

rough kiss. Tony groaned as Loki dominated it, fingertips scratching back and forth through his hair as Loki's tongue slid against his. Tony's hand lost the gentle slide against Loki's cock and became firm instead, tugging and demanding.

When Tony could tell that Loki was getting close he broke the kiss, Loki's hazy eyes finding his. Loki's lips were slightly swollen and wet with saliva. His ponytail had become loose as it'd been shoved up against the headboard, and his dress shirt gaped open obscenely. It was still half-buttoned at the bottom, Loki's engorged cock contrasting the white fabric. Loki brushed a finger against his own lips. He was utterly gorgeous. Tony's own cock ached at the sight.

Loki wrapped his arms around Tony's shoulders, drawing him in as he closed his eyes. Loki's head dropped back against the headboard, a vein in his neck standing out. Tony wanted to run his tongue along it, but he didn't want to miss seeing Loki come. Tony's hand didn't lose its rhythm. Loki's top teeth sank in against his bottom lip. His hips shifted. Tony held his breath, mesmerized. A moment later Loki came, mouth dropping open as his eyelids fluttered, body going still.

Tony stared, his own clothes unbearably hot now. Loki opened his eyes and they met halfway, their kiss just as heated as before.

When they broke apart, Tony was sweltering. He peeled his shirt off and threw it on the bed, relieved to take his pants off. He probably shouldn't have done that with Loki first because he knew he wasn't going to last long anyway. The instant his clothes were off, Loki was backing him up to the headboard, pressing Tony's shoulders to it as their tongues intertwined.

Loki's hand grasped his hard cock and Tony let out a strangled groan, thinking that Loki was about to do the same as Tony had for him. He felt Loki's breath drift against his cheek, Loki's hand still, and blinked his eyes open to find Loki watching him expectantly.

Tony set his hands on Loki's shoulders. Loki kissed him once, tenderly, before sinking down onto the bed. That image alone was enough to make Tony think he was about to lose it. Loki hesitantly pressed his lips to the base of Tony's cock before his warm tongue traced a wet line down it with more certainty. Loki took just the head into his mouth, and Tony found himself winding his fingers into Loki's hair, at the base of his neck where his ponytail was loose enough that Tony's fingers could massage his scalp in reassuring little motions. Loki moved himself closer to make that easier, grasping Tony's cock with one hand as he sucked.

Tony felt his thoughts slipping away and barely had the awareness to warn Loki before he was coming. Loki didn't move. The bed groaned as Loki sat up, drawing Tony's hands from his head and holding them with warm hands. He was still mostly dressed, Tony realized, as Loki moved to curl up against him. He set his head on Tony's chest.

Tony wrapped his arm around Loki. They were quiet. Loki brushed his thumb against his lip, wiping away what was left of Tony's come. They were quiet for another moment before Loki pulled away, grabbing his tea from dinner and knocking it back in one go. As his nose started to wrinkle he turned his head so that Tony couldn't see. The cup rattled as Loki set it down.

Tony held his arm out for Loki to rejoin him. Loki nosed against Tony's neck the way Tony loved. "It's not the best taste in the world," Tony commiserated.

"No," Loki agreed. He drew Tony's hand toward him, locking their fingers together. "But you have seemed to enjoy it."

Tony kissed Loki's hair. "An acquired taste." Tony let out a content sigh, squeezing Loki's hand.

Loki squeezed back, brushing his thumb against Tony's wrist. Quietly, he said, "It is not as easy to perform as writing would lead you to believe."

Tony's first instinct was to joke, but he heard the vulnerability lurking in Loki's voice. He'd learned a lot when he'd simply talked to Loki about sex last time. This was a good opportunity to do that. "How so?" Tony asked, making certain to keep his voice level and curious.

Loki shifted against the bed, leaning more weight into Tony's side. It took him a while to answer. "I am not entirely certain what to do."

"Oh. Well, I'll teach you," Tony said. "And—" Tony dug back into his memories, trying to remember how he'd felt in the beginning. In a couple of them he was half drunk, and he didn't want that for Loki. It hadn't really helped, either, looking back. "Um. I'll show you too, okay?"

Loki squeezed his hand in reply. "I liked tonight, if you're wondering," Tony reassured him.

"I know." Loki withdrew from his chest so that he could face Tony. "I did too."

Tony smiled back at him. He was getting a feeling that Loki was trying to say something more, but he wasn't sure what it was. Loki was definitely staring back at him with affection though. "What?" Tony asked.

"I need a shower."

Tony's gaze dropped down to Loki's wrecked work shirt and his spent cock lying against his slacks. "Yeah," was all he could say, half wondering why Loki didn't seem to care that he'd worn them.

"Come on," Loki said. "You do too."

Tony eagerly followed him into the bathroom, but then spent the next five minutes gushing over all the different travel soaps they had and letting Loki try each of them on him. He was having a wonderful weekend, and it'd barely started.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is definitely going to have more of their weekend trip, thank you for being patient waiting for this update! :D

Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

I didn't forget about these two, I just haven't been able to write. Please enjoy a happy chapter :)

Half of the winery was indoors, and the other half was a massive patio with chairs and tables that overlooked the rolling hills and vineyard. Tony and Loki were seated at a table on the far end of the patio.

Loki had one arm laid against the back of his chair, sitting like he owned the world. The breeze blew through his hair, softly catching it before letting go again. He was wearing sunglasses. The aura of cool coming from him would've amused Tony if he hadn't found it so wonderfully attractive.

Tony twirled the wine in his glass. He knew the whole tap and dance for drinking it. He just didn't care. Tony had let Loki pick a bottle of wine for them. Truth be told, he wasn't infatuated with the taste of wine in general, but he didn't hate it either. Tony sipped at his, more interested in the cheese and fruit platter in front of them.

The place was busy, and nearly all of the tables were full. It was a younger crowd too. Tony didn't miss noticing how more than a few people checked them out. "Hey, Loki." Loki's glass stilled from how he'd been idly tilting it. "Who here do you think is attractive?"

Loki gave the place a calculating glance. He scanned the winery not once, but twice before he answered after a long pause. "No one in particular." His green eyes flicked back to Tony. "Except you, of course." He added it as an afterthought, as if he'd inadvertently offended Tony. In fact, Loki was so blasé about it that Tony knew he was being genuine, not sucking up. And that was kind of confusing. "Why?" Loki asked, more attentive.

"Oh. Well. I was wondering if you had a type or, I don't know. I wanted to know what you find hot, I guess." Tony adjusted his sunglasses. "Like if you were looking around here, who would you take home?"

Loki shrugged. "I don't find the thought particularly appealing." He took a sip from his glass. "It is difficult for me to imagine that I would enjoy it the same way I do with you."

Tony stared at Loki.

He sipped his wine, oblivious to the thoughts spinning around in Tony's head.

"You're not being cute," Tony thought aloud. "You mean that." It was as heartwarming as it was puzzling. He knew he'd talked to Loki about similar things before, but he still hadn't wrapped his mind around it completely. Tony turned his head and looked out over the place again. There were probably a dozen people he'd be willing to take home. A lot more that he'd probably say yes to, even if they weren't who he'd pick out. In the back of his mind, he'd always thought that everyone was like that. They just acted on it to different degrees.

But that wasn't how Loki worked. Tony wondered if he'd met other people like Loki and just never known it. It wasn't like Tony had thorough discussions on attraction with the people he slept with.

"Does that bother you?"

Tony turned back to Loki. He shook his head. "No. I just. I guess sometimes I still can't get over the idea that you were single when I met you. I'd think you could have anybody you wanted."

Loki broke into a grin. "I already told you, I have a secret lover I'm using to advance my company."

Tony found himself smiling at Loki's teasing, although he was still half lost in thought. Tony held his gaze for a moment, Loki's image a tint of pink from the colored lenses of Tony's glasses. Loki twirled his wine glass. "Is it really so surprising?" Loki asked.

"Yeah," Tony admitted. He went to comb his fingers through his hair and then stopped, remembering how much time he'd spent that morning styling it to get just the right degree of carelessness to it. "How'd you write your stories?" Tony asked, genuinely curious.

Loki set his glass down, tracing his finger up and down the stem.

"Research," Loki said. "And imagination." He paused, eyes bright and warm as he thought about it. "I did consider accuracy, but ultimately I never intended to have anyone read them." He brushed a lock of hair back behind his ear. "You never found them odd?" Loki asked.

Tony shook his head. They were dramatic as hell, but Tony wasn't going to say that. Loki looked away, lost in his own thoughts but seemingly pleased by Tony's response.

"Sometimes the details made me think you had to have done that stuff with other people. Like the lingerie." Tony plucked a grape off the cheese plate. "I was jealous of whoever inspired it, actually."

Loki's lips twitched up in a half-smile that he kept trying to fight down.

Tony grabbed a cheese cube. He hadn't thought about it, but maybe that was a tiny part of why he'd wanted to do the lingerie.

"I still need to purchase you a set," Loki said quietly. He pressed a hand to his mouth, thinking.

"We could pick one out together," Tony offered.

Loki smiled politely. "But then it wouldn't be a surprise." He brushed his hair back behind his ear.

"You really love surprises, don't you?"

"When I'm the one orchestrating them," Loki answered. He took a long sip from his glass, his face in profile to Tony so that his eyes were visible past the arm of his sunglasses.

Tony could understand that. Loki poured himself another glass. The waitress came by and Loki ordered a glass of something else while Tony declared he'd stick with the cheese plate. He watched as Loki chatted with the waitress and discussed the finer points of the wine menu, marveling at how confident and in control Loki was. It'd made perfect sense to assume Loki would be domineering in the bedroom too. Tony looked away, wondering if Loki would change once they'd been together longer and things weren't so new.

Tony picked up his wine glass. He pictured that Loki, the one more like his initial fantasies, and found himself disinterested. That seemed odd. Then it dawned on him. He'd grown fond of the Loki that could put so much weight into a single kiss.

And he liked teaching Loki. He loved being with Loki as he experienced things for the first time. He loved the way Loki looked at him when they were together and the way Loki cared so damn much.

Tony didn't even need to hear Loki say that he loved him. It was obvious in a million tiny ways. It was still nice to hear it, but Tony knew.

Tony gulped down some of his wine. He'd never pegged himself as the kind of guy that'd like showing and teaching someone, but he really did with Loki. It made him feel close to Loki in a way that was difficult to describe.

It was downright intense too, though Tony couldn't understand why.

He'd always taken the attachments free playboy label as a given, but now he wasn't sure that it fit quite right. And he didn't really care if it didn't fit anymore. The thought was a pleasant surprise.

"What're you thinking about?"

Tony glanced over. The waitress was just leaving, and Loki was watching him with curiosity. "I was thinking about how I can teach Dum-E to be better at fetch."

"You're always thinking about programming something," Loki said warmly. "I should've assumed." He set his elbow on the table, resting his chin on the palm of his hand. "Have you ever thought about starting your own robotics company?"

Tony blinked.

"I'd want to acquire it of course," Loki said. He was speaking slightly faster than usual. "Or I suppose we could take you on as a client and manage things for you, but you could absolutely make it at your own company, Tony." Loki rubbed his nose. "You could call it Stark Enterprises. Or Stark International."

"Maybe," Tony shrugged. "I'm pretty happy where I am right now."

Loki let out a wistful sigh, then slumped back in his seat.

The waitress appeared with Loki's new glass of wine. He thanked her, then took his time appreciating the new glass. "I don't think I'd like the whole running the business aspect," Tony said.

"Then let me find someone that would take care of it for you," Loki said. "You can invent, and they can manage the day to day operations."

"I'd miss Rhodey and the guys," Tony said.

Loki's smile faltered. "What?" Tony asked.

"Nothing. I—miss having you at work is all." Loki drank from his glass with less delicacy than before.

"Loki, I—"

“—You are much better off where you are now,” Loki cut him off. “Tony, I absolutely meant it when I said working in that basement was beneath you.”

Tony bit his lip. He could tell that Loki had more to say. Loki’s eyebrow twitched as he stared down at his glass.

“It doesn’t mean that I don’t miss you being there,” Loki finished.

“Lo,” Tony began, his voice softer than before.

Loki cleared his throat. “There is no need to console me. This trip is about me spoiling you, and I intend to do so.” Loki set his glass down. “Shall we go shopping?”

Tony challenged him with a skeptical stare. Loki didn’t react. “Are you serious?” He prompted. Loki just picked his wine glass back up and sipped. “I think today’s the day I’m going to get to meet drunk Loki,” Tony said.

Loki held up his finger. “Tipsy me,” he said. “And it goes no farther than that. This is bad enough.”

Tony rolled his eyes, then realized he was missing an opportunity. “So Lo,” Tony said, looking as impish as Loki did when he was up to something. “What’s something you haven’t told me?”

Loki watched him, uncomprehending.

“Maybe something like a dirty thought you haven’t wanted to tell me, or...?”

Loki covered his mouth with his hand. At first Tony thought it was because he was actually hiding something, but then he thought it was probably to cover up a burp. Tony frowned, giving up. “Forget about it.”

Loki reached into his suit jacket. “We should go walk the shops.”

“*Can* you walk?” Tony teased.

Loki glared at him. Luckily, the waitress appeared, otherwise Tony was sure he would’ve gotten a scathing reply too. Loki paid the bill and then they started down the street, a cobble stone path beneath rows of lush pear trees.

Loki snuck his arm in around Tony’s, drawing him in closer. Tony knew beyond a doubt that it was the wine drawing forth the PDA, but he couldn’t have cared less. Tony seized the chance instead and reveled in the way that Loki would move with him if he veered a little too far to the side, clinging to him with an affection that amused and delighted Tony.

Tony deliberately paused and changed directions repeatedly, just to enjoy having Loki mirror him.

“Hey Lo,” Tony said. “What’s something you like about me?”

Loki’s attention had been on avoiding tripping on a cobble stone that jutted at an odd angle. “Your sense of humor,” he said after a moment.

It was a cliché answer, but Tony still liked it. “And my butt,” he supplied.

“You do have a nice butt,” Loki agreed. Tony smiled, wondering how much he’d get away with leading Loki to say when Loki paused beside a store window. Loki’s focus had fallen onto a pair of leather oxford shoes.

“Do you want to go in?” Tony asked.

“I have a pair like that at home,” Loki decided after a moment. There were dozens of shoes on display, artfully arranged on wooden stands. A slender red pair of heels was elevated above the rest. They reminded him of a girl he’d liked. “Did you see something you wanted?” Loki asked.

“No,” Tony said. “But there’s something sexy about a pair of red heels,” he thought aloud. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a pair that I didn’t like. Everyone looks good in them.”

Loki studied the heels that Tony had pointed out.

Tony started walking again, Loki in tow. “Look,” Loki said.

“What?” He squinted, unsure of what he was supposed to be looking at.

“There’s karaoke.”

Tony found himself grinning. They shouldn’t but it’d probably be fun. Hell, it would be super fun, especially with Loki tipsy. “Let’s go,” Tony said. “We’re renting a booth. I hope you can sing better than me.”

“I can make zero promises,” Loki replied.

While neither of them were going to quit their day jobs to sing, they could both hit a few good notes, and when Loki did he’d gloat towards Tony who’d only try to upstage him. Mostly though, they sang duets out of key and stuck to the fun songs. Tony was so happy that he was practically dizzy when they left.

Then Loki insisted that they stop for ice-cream. They wandered back towards the resort with lazy steps, eating waffle cones and pointing things in the shops out to each other. Tony couldn’t have asked for a better afternoon.

Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony was sprawled out on his bed, staring at the overnight bag on his dresser. He still hadn't unpacked it from their weekend trip. Later this evening Tony was going over to Loki's whenever he finally got home from work.

Tony rubbed his eyes. He'd been tired when he'd gotten home, so he'd taken a power nap. He wasn't sure if it had worked. All he really wanted to do was lay around in bed and wait.

Which was kind of silly and he had things he could be doing.

Sighing, Tony pushed himself up onto his elbows. He could at least unpack his bag. Tony forced himself up. The bag's zipper pulled back in one fell swoop. Tony threw his clothes at his hamper as he took them out, missing a couple of times. Shirts and socks were left in wrinkled lumps on the floor. A silver butt plug rolled across the bottom of his bag, catching the light.

Tony'd forgotten about it. They'd spent the last bit of the afternoon at the pool and then gone out for dinner and had drinks. Both of them were tipsy afterwards so they'd crawled into bed and talked, trying to make the other laugh until they finally passed out. In the morning they'd gone for a massage before the drive home. Tony had zero complaints about their weekend.

Tony dropped the plug back in the drawer, shoving it aside as he added other things. He was tidying his room for once when he heard his phone buzz on the dresser.

There were three missed texts from Loki.

I'm on my way home. That had been sent when Tony was napping.

I'm here.

When are you coming over?

Tony ran his fingers through his hair, checking himself in the mirror before replying. *Leaving now.*

When Tony got to Loki's building, he had to buzz himself in. "I'll leave my door unlocked," Loki told him through the speaker. "I'm taking cookies out of the oven."

That sounded incredible. Tony's mouth was already watering when he stepped into the elevator. Stuffing his face with warm chocolate chip cookies and watching a few episodes of Star Trek would be perfect. He'd kind of forgotten to eat dinner. Tony hoped that Loki had made a ton as he reached for the door handle of Loki's apartment.

He pushed the door open, expecting the scent of melted butter and vanilla, but found something perfume-like and floral instead. Then his eyes picked up on what should've grabbed his attention in the first place.

Loki was seated facing him in his black leather arm chair, wearing a sleek black suit, his hair down and curled at the ends against his shoulder. There was a regal, imperious air about him. He had his

chin in his hand. One leg was crossed over the other, that foot tapping impatiently, clad in the sharp toed point of a red satin heel.

“Are you going to close the door?” Loki asked loftily.

The spell was broken. As Tony thought to finish walking through the door and yes, close it (and his gaping mouth), his brain got back online. And he noticed several very important things. One, that chair was part of Loki’s sectional and he’d dragged it into that position specifically so it’d be facing the door when Tony walked in. Two, Loki had also dragged over the silver arc lamp so that it was set at a flattering angle near him and three, there were lit candles on Loki’s glass coffee table.

Something bubbled up in Tony’s chest. He held his breath. It wouldn’t be okay to laugh. It wouldn’t. It was just...Loki was trying so damn hard.

He didn’t have to. He could’ve pulled the heels out of the box from the store and stuck them on in front of Tony and gotten the same jaw dropping response.

“What?” Loki asked, uncrossing his legs. The power and certainty from before were slipping away to something brittle.

Tony started walking towards him, the smile he was holding back breaking free. Loki’s eyebrow dropped down in suspicion but then Tony was crawling into his lap and wrapping his arms around Loki’s shoulders.

“You promised me cookies.”

Loki glanced away. “I had intended for you to open the door without my assistance and needed an excuse—” Tony stole a kiss. He pulled away just as Loki started to kiss him back so that he could stare at Loki, as smug himself as Loki had been before. A red line blushed across the bridge of Loki’s nose, under his eyes and along his cheekbones.

“You could’ve just called to me that it was open when I knocked,” Tony said. He should’ve known. Loki didn’t bake.

“Well I don’t have cookies—”

“—No, you have something better.” Tony smiled at him, affection turning the lust in his eyes into something burning but almost cloying. Flustered, Loki stubbornly turned his head in profile, then dared a glance towards Tony from the corner of his eye. “Are you going to let me see you walk around in them?”

Loki tapped the back of his hand against Tony’s chest. “I can’t very well walk when you’re sitting in my lap.”

Tony held his hands up in surrender, Loki scowling at him as he got out of Loki’s lap and walked backwards a few feet. Loki set his arms along the chair. He didn’t seem to know what to do with himself. His sharp green eyes set on Tony, thinking, but his body language was uncertain.

Tony took a few steps away until he could sink down onto the couch. In the time it had taken him to do that, Loki seemed to have made a decision. He rose from the chair with grace.

Tony expected him to wobble. He didn’t really care how Loki walked in them though because it was the wearing them that did it for Tony.

Loki stood perfectly still, straightening his tie, before he took a confident step in Tony's direction. And slowly walked towards him with easy, fluid steps as his lips pulled back into a grin. Tony was speechless.

Loki paused beside him but then changed his mind. He walked the length of the room, past the glittering lights of the city beyond the window. As he returned to Tony's side there was a swagger in his hips that was hard to ignore. "Well?" Loki asked. Tony's mouth was dry.

"How did you do that?" Tony asked. He was genuinely surprised, and impressed. "Without tripping over yourself?"

"I took theater in high school," Loki explained, brushing his hair back over his shoulder.

Tony gawked at the shoes. He wouldn't have pictured them with a suit before, but damn, Loki pulled it off. He'd picked out the perfect pair, too. When Tony glanced back up at Loki, there was a soft, almost patient expression on his face. "Would you like to try them on?"

"Hell yes," Tony found himself saying. It looked like fun. Loki's toes slipped free from the shoes. Tony didn't know how that managed to be arousing, but it did. Then suddenly Loki was standing bare foot in front of him, several inches shorter. "Are you sure I won't stretch them?"

"Your feet are smaller than mine," Loki answered. He knelt down, reaching for Tony's shoe. It was oddly intimate. "As long as you don't run in them, you'll be fine," he said, slipping the sneaker from Tony's foot. A wave of self-consciousness passed through Tony as Loki drew the socks from his feet. Then Loki was lifting his ankle and easing his foot inside. Tony realized he was holding his breath. He was reluctant to have Loki's hands leave him, and for Loki to stand.

Tony steadied himself with the couch's armrest as he stood up.

Loki's arms reached out to catch him preemptively, hovering beside him as he took a step. The heels were a little too big so they clunked as Tony walked. He didn't know how he managed to keep them from sliding right off.

He did know that there was a huge smile on his face as he took a few more steps out into the living room. "This is insane," Tony said, giddy. He looked to the side and caught Loki's eyes, surprised as he found them returning his gaze at eye level for the first time in their relationship. Loki was grinning, amused or proud. It was hard to tell. "Wait," Tony said. He wobbled back and caught himself on Loki's shoulders, leaning in a bit.

And then he pushed Loki's shoulders down ever so slightly as he stretched as much as he possibly could. "I'm finally taller," Tony gloated. Instantly, Loki caught his waist and Tony found himself hoisted up bridal style. He let out a startled shout, one heel falling to the floor with a thud.

"What was that about being taller?" Loki teased.

"Haha," Tony said. "Put me down."

Loki snickered. Tony geared up to break out of the hold, but then Loki put him down, surprisingly gentle. Tony wedged his foot back into the lost heel. He held out his arms to steady himself as he took faster, more determined steps across the room.

At first it was just fun, but then he found himself feeling remarkably sexy too. He glanced back to see if Loki was watching.

He'd sat down on the couch's arm rest, his arms folded over his chest as he watched with warm

amusement. "Tell me I look good in these," Tony said. "See how they make my calves look!" He craned his neck to glance down at himself. "Okay, you're sexy in them, but they feel sexy to wear too." Holy shit, did they feel sexy.

Loki watched him for a moment longer before the corners of his eyes crinkled and a laugh that he couldn't hold back broke free, light and airy. Tony set his hands on his hips. He felt proud of himself as Loki laughed because all that joy was directed at him. "Walk heel toe, Tony. You're shuffling."

"I don't know if I can do that without them falling off," Tony admitted, trying anyway. It sort of worked, but he wobbled and had to stick his arms back out to balance.

"Look forward when you walk," Loki directed. "Put your chin up."

Tony did, sauntering towards Loki, his smile a blend of seduction and pure delight.

"And push your shoulders back a little," Loki said. Tony was almost to him, so he turned around and started back in the other direction, trying to perfect his walk. He had the sense that at any moment he could go careening or twist his ankle, but he was having too much fun to honestly care.

When Tony reached the far end of the couch he announced, "Tell me how I look."

He turned back towards Loki. Loki had one hand set against his face, his pointer finger tracing his lip as he thought. "They do make your ass look nice."

Tony laughed. "That's because I have a nice one."

Loki shook his head, rolling his eyes as he looked away and licked his lips. Tony was almost to his chair when he started to trip. Loki was standing and catching him before he could even process what'd happened. Instead he found himself pressed to Loki's chest, an embarrassed blush on his cheeks. "Thanks," he muttered.

Loki stroked his fingers through Tony's hair instead of letting him go.

Tony allowed himself one entirely self-indulgent moment, deeply breathing in so he could appreciate the full effect of Loki's cologne. "We're—we're like something out of a movie right now," Tony said. He glanced up at Loki who raised an eyebrow. "Do you want to have a fight? Just to spice things up a little?"

Loki broke into a low, rumbling laugh. "No," he said, his chest still shaking with it as he held Tony closer. "I'd rather not."

Tony wrapped his arms around Loki's waist, ignoring the pain that had begun to pulse in his feet. The shoes were sexy, but they sure as hell weren't comfortable.

"Sorry," Tony said suddenly. "You set up this whole scene and I ruined it."

"Nonsense." He set his forehead against Tony's. "I'm having a good time." Tony relaxed. "And watching you attempt to walk in those is better than anything I could've envisioned."

"I'd still like to see you in them again."

Loki pulled back. His hands slipped from Tony. "Alright," he said, taking a step back. The floor felt like a pillow as Tony stepped onto it, abandoning the shoes. Loki slipped into them as Tony sat down on the couch. "It's more convincing if you cross one foot a bit in front of the other."

He walked around the coffee table, the candle flames flickering in his direction as he passed. Loki made it look easy. Tony told him so.

“You have a smaller stride when you’re wearing them,” Loki explained. “So you have to take smaller steps.”

Tony set his chin in his hand, thinking. Loki circled the coffee table again. Loki had done this for him, and Tony wanted to give something in return. “Is there a pair of shoes that you’d like to see me in?” Tony asked.

Loki’s step faltered for the first time that night, but he righted it in the blink of an eye. “I—” He pressed his lips together. “May I think on it?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. “Of course.” Loki smiled at him before his gaze set deliberately forward. He paced into the center of the room before walking behind the couch. He set one hand against the back of it as he slipped from the heels, then hooked them together and tossed them over his shoulder to carry them.

“Would you like to try again?” Loki asked, perhaps mistaking Tony’s arousal for interest. But actually, he did want to try again.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “You give me pointers.”

“It’ll be easier when you have a pair that’s in your size,” Loki said.

Tony found himself grinning as he slid back into the shoes. He’d never pictured any of this when he’d seen the shoes in the store window. “Have I told you how much I like you?” Tony asked as he adjusted the heel. It was meant to be playful, but there was something genuinely vulnerable and young that flickered across Loki’s face when he heard it. “I’ve never been with someone that’s so much fun,” Tony said. He stared down at the shoe, adjusting his toes.

Loki didn’t seem to know what to say to Tony’s compliment. “Now tell me how to walk in these things without them hurting,” Tony said before it became too much of a moment.

“I don’t believe that’s entirely possible,” Loki said.

Tony glared as he thought. “I’ll figure out a way,” he said. “Maybe if I put in a cushion or something—”

“—Tony you’re not going to reinvent heels when they’ve been around for centuries—”

“—Sure I will,” Tony said. He took a wobbly step forward. “And then I’m going to patent the hell out of them.”

“That’s a relief,” Loki said. He settled back into the chair, propping his chin on his palm. “Stop looking down at your feet.”

Tony’s head snapped up. “Right,” he said.

He probably wasn’t going to get it down perfectly in one evening, but he was still going to have one hell of a good time trying.

Shout out to [this picture](#)([黑桃 意念力回复信息 on lofter](#)) and Sparcina and those of you supporting heels for inspiring them! There's also [this picture](#) (mokonosuke7). Maybe it'll become a big fandom trope. ;)

If you're up for it, it'd help me for something I'm working on to know what you associate with my writing or its characteristics in a few words.

I still have smut and fun chapters planned out, and I hope you enjoyed this one! :)

Chapter 40

Tony woke up before Loki. He knew he could walk into the kitchen and make a cup of coffee, but the soft, warm sheets were too cozy to leave. Loki was on the far end of the bed, and Tony could only see a rumpled mess of black hair as he listened to Loki's shallow breathing.

It was boring to just lay there though, so Tony slowly slipped out from beneath the covers to grab his phone before sneaking back in, trying not to jostle the mattress.

He drew the covers up over his bare chest, holding the phone closer to his face as he brought open his e-mail.

There was an ad with coupons for a pizza place he often used, another from a toy model company, and one automated reminder from his company about the softball game coming up. Tony froze.

Beneath that was an e-mail with the domain address of his father's company. He didn't recognize the name of the sender, but his name was in the subject line. Tony's heartbeat jumped as he decided to open it, dread following the decision.

Invitation to Tony Stark

Dear Tony Stark,

We would be honored to have your attendance at the Innovators and Industrialists Science Academy Awards Gala. Howard Stark will be receiving the Innovator of the Year Award. Food and drinks will be included with the evening's ceremonies. It is formal, black tie optional. Your admission ticket is attached. We hope to see you there!

Sally McIntyre
Executive Secretary

Tony drew in a tight breath.

He hadn't been invited to one of his dad's events in ages. He was pretty sure he'd been banned from them, actually.

But he hadn't talked to his dad in over a year and a half, almost two years? As long as he didn't count that drunk phone call the one time. Maybe...maybe it was a peace offering. Maybe his dad wanted to connect again? He had to have asked his secretary to send it, right? So his dad must've been thinking about him.

Did he have something to say to him at the event? Tony didn't know what he expected to hear his father say.

But why else would he send it? What reason could it possibly be?

Did he want to include Tony in on something? Had his mom wanted him to be at the event? Was there something that they both wanted to say to him? Did they feel differently now that he'd left?

"What're you looking at?"

Tony jumped. On instinct, he hid the phone. Wide eyed, he looked to find that Loki had rolled over and was very much awake. He was alert too, now, but he started to smile. "Are you looking at porn

in bed, Tony?” His smile turned smug.

Tony let out a breath, feeling slightly better and wishing that were the case. “No. I got an e-mail from my dad.” Loki’s expression instantly changed. “He invited me to some gala thing where he’s getting an award.”

Loki propped himself up on his elbows, still laying on his stomach as he held eye contact with Tony. “I thought you said he stopped inviting you to those when you were living at home.”

“Well yeah,” Tony said. “But he wouldn’t invite me now if he thought I was going to pull the shit I did as a kid.” He took the phone from its hiding place. “But I—that’s why there’s got to be something to it. Maybe he wants to say something.”

“By inviting you to an event where he’s getting an award?” Loki asked so dryly that Tony realized that part hadn’t even crossed his mind.

He skimmed over the e-mail again. “It’s just kind of how my family works. Events and stuff. Making a show.” He drew in a breath. He hoped that Loki had some sort of insight that he didn’t. Even if Tony knew he wasn’t sure, he had faith that Loki would see things more clearly. He had before. “I don’t know. Would you—” This felt huge, but Tony didn’t know why. “Look at it?”

Loki held out his hand. Tony bit his lip as he handed Loki the phone.

He studied Loki’s expression as his eyes darted across the text. Loki’s jaw set when he reached the end. Then he started over, tension settling into his features as he reread the e-mail and then did nothing but pretend to stare at the text as he thought.

Loki’s irritation slipped into his voice even as he seemed to try and restrain himself. “If your father really wanted you to attend, he should have sent the e-mail himself.”

“He always has his secretaries send stuff.” Hell, Tony’s nanny used to manage his whole schedule, even when she wasn’t there on the weekends.

Loki rolled onto his side so that he was facing Tony. His nostrils were flared and Tony knew he was annoyed, but he was aiming so hard for gentle when he spoke. “To me, this sounds like a form letter.” He set the phone down between them. “Is it possible that your father’s secretary simply assumed and added you to the list?”

Tony hadn’t even considered that.

“Could be.”

“Do you want to go?” Loki asked.

“I—” The pain in his chest said no, but Tony didn’t know. Maybe he partially felt like he should go. He wasn’t as angry as the day he’d shoved his things into bags and left. He’d had time to sort of forget about it. “I mean, I know my dad’s an asshole, but I haven’t seen him in almost two years.”

Tony set the phone on the nightstand. “When my dad was younger, he lost a friend, Steve. It was some sort of boating accident in Alaska. It really messed him up.” Tony held the back of his neck, remembering how the subject had always been off limits. “Maybe if it hadn’t happened, he wouldn’t have started drinking to cope. I think it’s why he has attachment issues. It’s just always haunted him.”

“That’s not an excuse for the way he’s treated you,” Loki said. Tony rolled his head to the side on

the pillow and found Loki staring back at him with determination and silent fury. “And he’s had twenty, thirty? Years to address it, Tony. He’s chosen not to. He is absolutely responsible for the way he’s treated you, lost friend or not.”

Tony frowned, his gaze dropping down to the mattress as he thought. “My dad’s got problems.”

“Yeah,” Loki said. “He does. And it’s not your job to fix them.” Tony glanced back over at him. “It’s not,” Loki said. “Your dad’s the only one who can choose to fix his shit. He could’ve chosen to make the effort to be there for you the way he should have been.” Loki looked up towards the ceiling, his eyes narrowed.

“You—you set out completely on your own, with no job lined up and nowhere to go. Tony, I have known I was going to have a role at Asgard my entire life. I put up with more from my father than I care to in order to stay. If I lost my job tomorrow, I’d be devastated. But you—you were in the same position with your father’s company. You could’ve inherited it. And yet you voluntarily gave that up and everything else to choose your own way—what I am trying to say, Tony, is that takes a terrible amount of *courage*.

“It’s one of the bravest acts I can think of. And look at you now—you have built an incredible life for yourself, Tony. You have a great job, and your robotics, and you have friends here, and you’ve built something that is entirely your own all by yourself.” Loki rubbed his nose, still staring at the ceiling in thought. “Your father didn’t get to be a part of that. And if you ask me, he doesn’t deserve to.” Loki glanced back at Tony. “I think you could show up at his awards ceremony and tell him all about where you are succeeding now and he’d still find some way to disapprove. But that’s his problem, not yours.”

Loki flopped onto his back, drawing the covers up closer but keeping a tight grip on them with one hand. “I think you should tell your dad to take his award ceremony and shove it.”

Tony had never had anyone praise the life he’d built for himself here. He turned the words over in his mind, marveling at how Loki saw things. It was so different from the disappointing son who’d run off that Tony saw.

“You really think so?” Tony asked.

“Yes.”

It was embarrassing, almost. Loki thought so highly of him, and it wasn’t that it was a surprise, but it was humbling to hear it said all the same. Loki’s eyes fell shut like he was going to try to go back to sleep.

Suddenly, the distance between them on the bed was unbearable. Tony curled in against Loki, feverishly kissing up the side of his neck. Loki laughed, startled, before Tony crawled over him and Loki’s arm curled around his back. “What?” Loki muttered.

Tony wanted to be inside him. He wanted Loki to *feel* how much he meant to him, and he wanted Loki to scream his name in ecstasy and know he’d made Loki feel that good. But, seeing as this wasn’t the time to figure out that step between them, he asked to be taken instead. “Now,” Tony added, burying his nose against Loki’s neck. Loki’s fingertips drummed against his back.

Tony pushed himself up to look at Loki. His hair was tangled around his face on the pillow. There was a question in his expression, but he was utterly relaxed against the bed too. His collarbone still bore a mark from the night before. “I want you,” Tony said in sheer honesty, though he had the second thought to try and make it seductive too.

“Then have me,” Loki answered, lips soft and yielding as Tony kissed him.

He was slow and languid where Tony was driven by desperate desire, impatient as he dug through Loki’s bedside drawer for things. It wasn’t until Tony finally had Loki sheathed inside him that he felt whole. Loki’s back arched against the mattress as Tony rode him, lost in the rhythm.

Tony felt sweat roll down his back, Loki’s soft gasps filling his ears. Tony’s eyes fell shut. He was close. He groaned when a hand curled around his neglected cock, tugging insistently. Tony came with a shout, mouth warped with pleasure, as Loki panted on the sheets beneath him. Tony had missed watching him come, and he practically whined when Loki moved to get off the bed and clean up. The moment Tony could draw him back in for lazy kisses he did, fresh mint toothpaste greeting his lips.

After a while they just laid there in each other’s arms, Loki absently stroking his fingers through Tony’s hair. “You know,” Tony said. “You still haven’t picked out a lingerie outfit yet. Do you still want to do that?”

Loki sighed, and it was a little more tense than Tony expected it to sound. “It is difficult to choose. I find myself wondering whether or not you’d be comfortable wearing anything that I look at.”

“I told you what I like,” Tony said. He’d given Loki some guidelines, but there hadn’t been many limits.

Loki shifted as Tony traced his fingers down Loki’s spine. “When you choose something for yourself, you know if you’ll like the cut of the fabric, or the texture, or if there’s something about it that you wouldn’t like wearing. When you’re choosing it for someone else, you don’t know those things. As much as I’d like to see some things on you, I imagine if the tables were reversed and I were the one wearing something I didn’t like, I wouldn’t enjoy it very much.”

“But I’d wear it because you like it,” Tony said. “And I’d like that part.”

“And I’d do the same,” Loki said. “But you understand my point?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. Loki’s skin was cool beneath his fingertips as he followed the ridge of Loki’s shoulder blade.

“When someone dislikes what they’re wearing, it shows.” Loki brushed his cheek against the pillow. “I can tell a lot about our clients from the way they are dressed and how they hold themselves.” Loki’s hand had stilled in Tony’s hair. “You were confident in the outfit you picked. I want you to have that same look on your face.”

“Well I really like the idea of you surprising me with something,” Tony said. Loki could probably ask him anything in the world right now and he’d answer truthfully, he felt so open. “But what if you pick out several things and let me pick from them? That way I’ll see them and tell you if there’s something I don’t like, but you can still surprise me with what you finally choose?” Tony stretched his toes. “You could even throw things in there you aren’t considering. I wouldn’t know.”

“That would work,” Loki said. He pulled Tony in tighter to his chest, and Tony found himself drawing in so that Loki would set his chin over his head. “It’s a perfect idea.”

“I’m full of them,” Tony answered.

Loki must’ve smiled because he was quiet for a beat before answering, “You’re full of something, alright.”

Tony breathed out a laugh. He thought about demanding that they get up for breakfast, but decided he wanted to stay just like this for a while longer.

Chapter 41

As Loki walked towards Tony's car, a shiny black carry on luggage set rolled after him. Loki set it into the back seat with practiced ease. Then he slid in the front beside Tony. "You know, you could just start leaving your things at my place," Tony told him. He'd started leaving clothes at Loki's. Nothing had ever been said about it, but they were always neatly folded and easy to find.

"I left my pajamas at your place," Loki said. Tony didn't remember. It was probably in his laundry hamper, unnoticed. "But your hairdryer's abysmal and I don't need two of them."

Tony shrugged. He pulled out of the parking lot. "How was the get together?"

A hum, maybe a stifled laugh fell from Loki's lips. "Good. Victor thinks twenty million is an impressive sum to negotiate," Loki said with a mix of condescension and pride. "He was finding ways to work it into conversations and brag all night." Definitely amusement.

Loki had always insisted that those in the business networking group he met up with weren't his friends, just associates. Tony imagined that it was all very Mad Man-esq, but he also figured that Loki was better friends with them than Loki admitted to himself.

"Did you tell him how much you've negotiated in deals?" Tony asked, knowing from his time at Asgard that Loki had a right to brag.

"No," Loki said with a lofty note. "Max and I were exchanging looks the whole time. There was no need to say anything. It was far more fun to let Victor embarrass himself." Loki set his elbow against the car door, propping his head up as he leaned against it. "Max started some program called Magneto. I think he made that amount in the first quarter." Loki sighed. "Victor is always such a treat."

Tony smiled to himself, shaking his head. As they came to a stop light, he glanced over at Loki. He was wearing sunglasses, but it was overcast and gloomy outside. His tie was missing. He was still wearing a white oxford shirt and black dress slacks, but in comparison to his usual attire that looked frumpy. "Are you hungover?" Tony asked.

"No," Loki lied.

"Loki," Tony chided him.

"Fine," Loki gave in easily. "I am. And I have a splitting headache, so Rhodey had better have picked a good movie."

"Rhodey's taste is perfect," Tony said, turning down a side street. "And I know he already ordered pizza."

"That's good." Loki pushed his sunglasses up the bridge of his nose. "We should stop and get something to bring over."

Tony took a right to enter a shopping center. "Do you want to pick out a dessert?"

"Sure," Loki said, rolling up his sleeves to cuffs at his elbows.

They stayed late at Rhodey's. Happy and Glenda were there too. Rhodey and Loki had teamed up to tease Tony again, but Happy didn't buy into any of it and his loudly saying so dulled its effect. Overall, everyone had a great time. When Tony started up the stairs to his apartment building to the sound of Loki's luggage rolling and bumping on the cracks in the concrete, he figured that Loki had to be more tired than him.

He unlocked the front door of the building, then his own apartment door, holding it wide so that Loki could roll his luggage inside. "It smells like cinnamon apple."

From Loki's eyes, it was easy to tell that he was wide awake.

"Yeah, I stuck one of those plug in things in the wall after I burned a circuit board." Tony locked the door, noticing how Loki lingered near him. "I figured that it was better than the smell of burnt plastic and metal." He started towards the bedroom. Tony changed into his pajamas, Loki following suit. He wore a gray button up cotton shirt, but this pajama set had cotton shorts that were black with very tiny white polka dots. Tony stared at Loki's legs in his bedroom mirror, appreciating the new look way too much.

"I'm going to go steal from your fridge," Loki said, oblivious to Tony's ogling.

"It's not really stealing," Tony told him. Loki only hummed, disappearing through the doorframe. Tony flopped down on the bed. He yawned, rubbing his eyes. For a while he laid there, drifting off.

Then he heard a soft "oh" from the hallway and opened his eyes. "You're sleeping," Loki said. "I didn't mean to wake you—"

"—No, it's fine," Tony said. He started to sit up.

"I drank too much coffee at Rhodey's," Loki explained. He pointed vaguely down the hall. "I was going to watch TV or read..."

"I'll come," Tony said. He got up before Loki could argue. "You pick out what you want to watch."

When Loki sat down on the couch, Tony curled up against him without a second thought. "I'm going to sleep," Tony informed him as Loki's arm came around his shoulders. "I can sleep through the TV."

"Tony, you can just go to sleep in bed. I don't want you to feel as though you have to—"

"—I want to," Tony said.

Loki's tense muscles relaxed, and Tony didn't listen to the TV for more than five minutes before he was out.

Tony woke up in the middle of the night, pinned between Loki and the back of the couch. Once he figured out where he was, he drifted right back to sleep. In the morning though, his neck and his back were killing him. Loki was gone. Tony heard him moving around in the bathroom. Tony went into the kitchen to get breakfast and found Loki sitting on the couch when he came back in.

Loki's hair was drawn back into a messy bun with a few loose curls around his face that he didn't seem to be aware of. He was reading on his tablet as he sipped a cup of coffee.

Tony flipped on the TV as he sat down beside him. He took a massive bite out of a doughnut. Loki shifted. He reached for his coffee.

Tony rubbed the back of his neck in vain. He was going to regret sleeping on the couch all day. “Did you sleep alright?” Loki asked.

“Yeah. You?”

“I woke up on the floor at some point,” Loki said. He sounded like he thought that was more funny than annoying. “But other than that, yes.”

Tony smiled, only half awake.

He noticed Loki getting fidgety, but he didn’t think too much of it. Not until Loki cleared his throat and Tony glanced over to find Loki staring at him. Loki immediately looked away, then back. “I— found the pieces that I want you to look through.”

It took Tony a moment to understand what pieces referred to. He smiled, holding out his hand. “Let’s see.”

Loki carefully set the tablet in Tony’s hand. The first image was of a sailor uniform bikini. Tony had a joke halfway on his tongue, but he remembered that Loki wanted these. While it was true that some of them might be in there to throw him off, it was equally possible that none of them were. Tony didn’t want to discourage Loki or make him feel bad about a choice.

“It’s a little costume-y,” Tony admitted. “Which is fine if you want to do costumes, but I kinda had the impression that you wanted something a little more—” Tony frowned. Sexy? Elegant?

“I just wanted to see your reaction on that one.” Loki’s voice was light enough that Tony believed him. Loki was smiling too as he flicked his finger across the screen to bring up the next image.

It was a strappy black getup that Tony could see the appeal of. Tony started flipping through. A set of sheer red panties with gold trim. A black and white lace getup that was very maid-like. An emerald green lace set that looked soft and elegant. A red corset with a ribbon down the back that looked a whole lot like the one Tony already had. A pure white ensemble. “Uhh—” He said, staring at the next one. It was black and frilly. They were elegant frills, but still frilly. “Maybe not that one.”

“Okay,” Loki said. He was so laid back about it that Tony realized he’d actually felt a bit guilty saying it and that there was absolutely no reason to.

The next was a diaphanous gold robe that was floor length. Frankly, Tony thought it was a little too tame. “This is something I think that you’d look good in,” Tony said.

“Maybe,” Loki agreed. “Is there one you like more than the others?”

On impulse, Tony wanted to say the panties. Something about the colors drew him in. “The red and gold,” Tony told Loki. “But—” He flipped back through. “I like that the green set has a collar on it.” Tony felt a brush crawl along his cheeks and he coughed, hoping that his morning shadow helped cover it up. “And uh, I feel like the red corset is the same as the one I’ve got, just in a different color.”

“I’d thought something similar,” Loki admitted. “The red and gold alone seemed incomplete, though.”

“I don’t think so,” Tony said. He handed the tablet back to Loki. “I think if you get those though, it’d be more fun to give them to me and not know when I’m wearing them.”

Loki pressed a hand to his forehead. “And you say that I’m the tease.”

“It’s true though!” Tony reached for his coffee, smiling. Loki was in a good mood and open, and they were already talking about stuff. Now felt like a good time to ask. “Hey, do you remember a while back you said you’d be into being taken?” Tony ruffled his own hair as Loki held too still to be natural. “Well I was thinking that now that we’ve tried a little more, maybe we could try and reverse things?”

Tony was lightyears more comfortable with Loki than he had been, and he was certain that it was mutual. He didn’t know if Loki was ready, but he knew the only way to know was to ask. Tony’s coffee mug felt too heavy as he watched Loki stare at the couch, choosing his words carefully.

“Not this morning,” Loki said.

“No, yeah, I didn’t mean this morning,” Tony said immediately.

Loki smiled for Tony before finishing his thought. “But I am curious.”

Tony was elated. He tried to tamp it down though, taking a sip of his coffee to hide his smile. It backfired though, and then he was coughing and choking on it. Tony blinked through the tears, clearing his throat. “I’m fine,” he said as Loki asked. “So uh, good. I’d like that.” He’d like it a hell of a lot.

Loki set the tablet down on the table, grabbing his own coffee mug. It was still half full, but he went into the kitchen and made another cup. Tony snatched the tablet back. He liked the photos. Everything in them looked like something that Loki would look good in too. He had the feeling that they were going to create an impressive wardrobe.

“This Tuesday,” Loki said. He walked towards the couch, his gaze set on his mug. “Let’s do it at my place.”

“You want to schedule it?” Tony said. “I don’t want you to feel like it’s a chore—”

Loki shook his head, sitting down beside Tony. “I’d rather know. It would make me more comfortable to know so that I can plan.”

“You’re sure?” Tony asked.

When Loki looked at him, Tony felt a whole lot more certain. There was trust in his expression, and even though Tony could tell that Loki was a little nervous, there was Loki’s familiar confidence too. “I’m sure.” He frowned at the tablet. “I won’t be able to get any of those pieces shipped in time. I suppose I could see if any of them can be overnighted.”

“Maybe let’s leave that out for this,” Tony said. “Just the first time. I’d rather focus on you.”

“Cute,” Loki praised him, amused too.

“I’m not being cute—” Tony sighed, exasperated. “I’m just saying let’s focus on one thing at a time.”

“Uh-huh,” Loki answered, sipping his coffee. If he hadn’t been, Tony would’ve shoved at his arm in retaliation.

Instead, Tony waited until Loki set his warm mug of coffee down on the table to steal it, leaving his cold and mostly finished mug for Loki. “Anthony Edward Stark,” Loki scolded.

Tony kicked his feet up onto his coffee table, ignoring Loki as he hastily sipped the hot liquid down.

“On second thought, I’m going to purchase you a leopard print sling swimsuit.”

“You can purchase it all you want. I’m not going to wear it.”

Loki huffed, crossing his arms. “Difficult,” he muttered.

“But you love it,” Tony told him, finishing off the mug. Loki sighed, but in it Tony heard the unspoken confirmation that he did.

Tony was going to struggle waiting through Monday.

Chapter 42

Tony got up, rubbing his eyes and yawning. Loki wasn't in bed, so Tony figured that he was in the shower. As Tony walked into the kitchen, he came to a dead stop.

Loki was wearing Tony's favorite flannel button up shirt. He had his elbows in front of him, and the shirt barely covered his ass as he leaned over the counter, holding his coffee mug. If that hadn't been enough, he was wearing those red heels again.

"I was cold last night so I took this," Loki said, tugging at the shirt. It rode up as he did, the curve of his ass peeking out. He sipped his coffee, blinking innocently at Tony like he had no clue about how all of Tony's blood was rushing downward.

Tony's lips quirked upward. "Were your feet cold too?"

"Terribly," Loki said, tipping his coffee mug towards himself as he drank.

Tony came up behind him, grasping his hips. Loki moaned, dropping the mug on the counter. It spilled, dripping on the floor as Loki pressed back against him. "Tony," he said, voice flirty and flattered. "Let me help you with that."

Loki bent down over the counter, bracing his arms against it. Tony flipped the shirt up over his back and cupped his ass with both hands. "Lo," Tony muttered, kissing the back of his neck.

"Tony," Loki said, glancing back over his shoulder with lust as clear as day.

Tony slid in with one push, Loki's groan loud enough for all the upstairs neighbors to hear. As Tony pounded into him, he cried out Tony's name in obscene, broken shouts.

"That must be one hell of a program if it's making you smile like that," Rhodey said.

Tony glanced up from his computer. Busted.

"He's probably daydreaming about his boyfriend," Happy said before Tony could get a word in.

"Oh Loki," Rhodey said, placing a hand on his chest. He batted his eyelashes as Happy started to laugh.

"You'd better check that thing over and make sure it's not just fifty lines saying Tony Stark-Odinson," Happy said.

"Shut up guys," Tony said, blushing. He started typing lightning fast. He hated how easy it was for them to guess right.

Tony'd worked out several other daydreams before the end of the day. Loki crawling into his lap while they were watching a movie and riding him. Loki bent over the couch, so loud that Tony's neighbors stomped on the ceiling. Tony pulling his cheeks apart and exploring with his tongue as Loki grasped at the mattress and cried that it was so good before Tony filled him. By the time Tony was riding the elevator up to Loki's place, he'd replayed his favorite scenarios a dozen times.

Tony stuck his hands in his pockets, drumming his thumbs against his jeans. He was entirely confident that Loki would love it. For one thing, Tony knew what he was doing, and he'd had a

pretty easy time of it himself when he'd been in Loki's position. He'd slept with a thespian that'd gotten a pretty bad crush on him at a party. Tony hadn't cared that much for the guy's arrogance, but Tony'd been curious to try and it'd been a good opportunity. The guy'd been wearing a long red cape with a gold pendant on his chest. It was downright hilarious now that he thought about it. Had it been on Halloween? He couldn't remember.

Tony walked up to Loki's apartment with a swagger in his step. Seconds after he knocked, Loki opened the door.

Loki was still dressed in his full work attire, right down to a shiny new pin across his tie. "Did you just get home?" Tony asked, taking off his shoes and setting them beside Loki's at the door.

"No. I got home over an hour ago. I just made tea, would you like anything? Your sodas are still in the fridge."

"I'm good with water," Tony said. He noticed that Loki's laptop was open on his coffee table. Several pages and a few highlighters were scattered around it, as if he was still working. "Did you bring your work home with you?"

Loki followed his gaze, then shrugged it off. "No. You may go ahead and sit down, I'll grab your drink."

Tony sunk down on the couch. He realized that his heart was beating too quickly and wondered if he was nervous. He didn't *feel* nervous. He busied himself by looking around. A shiny white teacup was filled with a yellow tea beside the papers. Naturally, Tony found himself leaning forward to catch a glimpse of what was on the laptop. Loki's home screen. "I should know better than to leave you alone with that," Loki said.

"I—" Tony said sheepishly.

Loki didn't appear bothered or annoyed. He set Tony's water glass on a fancy gold trimmed agate coaster. "At work we have a new IT tech, part time."

"What's he like?" Tony asked, finding himself irrationally jealous.

"I haven't met her," Loki said, grabbing his teacup and settling back into his chair. "As long as everything works, I don't expect to." Tony had to admit that he was relieved. "It was unpleasant to be taking my smoke breaks outside again when it was still cold out, but now I don't mind so much."

"Why don't you just say you're taking a regular break and leave more?"

"This is a far easier excuse. Believe me," Loki said, leaving no room for questions. He smiled at Tony then. "How was your day?"

"Good. We got a new client that's been a lot of work, but it's been easy work. Nothing too exciting." Did they need small talk? This wasn't bad, but this was small talk, right?

"I believe that Thor has found a new girlfriend at his gym. He's talked about her a few times. I think her name's Valerie." Loki frowned as he cradled his the teacup. "He made it sound like Valkyrie." He sipped. "I don't know much about her except that she chugs power drinks while she's there and has an impressive bench press."

"How much does she lift?"

Loki's eyes flicked towards Tony with an unbearable amount of sass. "What is an impressive weight?"

Tony worked out sometimes. He also went boxing with Happy sometimes, but that could be dangerous because Happy didn't go easy on anybody. Still, he thought he could make a reasonable guess. "A hundred and fifty pounds."

"Then she lifts two hundred," Loki said.

Tony smiled, not because it was funny, but because of how ridiculous Loki was. "How much does Thor lift?"

"A thousand," Loki said dryly.

"Don't you go to the gym?" Tony asked.

"I run," Loki said. "And I can beat Thor in a wrestling match, occasionally." He set his teacup on his knee, holding the handle as he thought. "We rough housed a lot as kids, but I don't have the discipline to do reps and the like as he does. It doesn't hold my interest. I can listen to a podcast or watch television when I'm running, though."

Tony nodded. On one hand, it was nice because this chat felt so utterly normal, and that put him at ease. On the other hand, Tony kind of felt like it was a distraction. He picked up his glass, condensation dripping down his fingers as he drank. "Running was hell when I smoked," Loki said. "I actually gave it up until I was quitting."

"Yeah." Tony rubbed his neck, noticing how Loki's dress slacks were tighter at his thighs, displaying the outline of his legs instead of hiding them with fabric.

"I rarely find time to go though," Loki said. "Sometimes I stop by the gym after work, but that's exhausting." Loki set his empty teacup on the coffee table. "Thor dragged me with him to the gym when we teenagers, but mainly when he wanted someone to tag along with him when there were cute girls at the gym."

Not that Loki's story wasn't riveting, but Tony wanted to fast forward to the good part. "Hey babe," he said, laying on the endearment just right. "You are gorgeous tonight and I've been thinking about how much I want you all day. Could we maybe move to the bedroom?" Loki blinked, maybe blushed, it was hard to tell. "Because I would really like to."

Instead of answering, Loki rose from his chair. "You are gorgeous too," he said. It was a bit awkward, but Tony took it to heart all the same.

Tony almost tripped over himself, following after Loki.

Usually Loki's bedroom was messier than the rest of his place, but today it was immaculate. Loki sat down on the edge of the bed. He ran his pointer finger over his tie pin, but it didn't look intentional. "I have been thinking about you all day as well," Loki said, a bit quieter than he'd been in the living room.

"Well I hope they were good thoughts," Tony smiled.

Loki smiled back at him, and this time it seemed genuine. "They were."

Tony crawled into his lap, wrapping his arms around Loki's shoulders. "We can go as slow as we need to. Just talk to me."

Loki caught Tony's hip, kneading his fingers in Tony's lower back. Tony was half hard already. He'd wanted this for so long that the desire was already coursing through him and making his skin electric. "I know." Loki combed his fingers through Tony's hair, looking at Tony with something like curiosity before slowly drawing in for a kiss that Tony eagerly met halfway.

Loki's fingers flexed in his hair. Tony moaned, sounding desperate to his own ears. He grabbed Loki's tie, holding it like an anchor as he traced Loki's tongue, tasting the peppermint and chamomile from his tea. Loki's hands fell to his hips, gripping and pulling Tony in closer. Tony's voice escaped him in a needy groan. He rocked his hips, disappointed that there wasn't a bulge to greet him.

Tony's own pants were strained and starting to hurt though. He reached down, yanking open his jean button. In the quiet room, the zipper was immeasurably loud. After a moment Loki's hands shifted, grabbing the waist band and peeling Tony's jeans down until Tony found himself scrambling off the bed and kicking his jeans onto the floor with his briefs before crawling right back into Loki's lap.

Loki chuckled, the sound deep and rich. "Eager," Loki murmured, grasping the edge of Tony's shirt and drawing it upward. In the seconds that Loki vanished from his vision Tony worried he was coming off as too eager. But as the fabric was pulled away, he found Loki leering at him, the grin on his lips genuine and seductive.

"You're always last to undress," Tony complained, his voice ragged and breathy. He reached for Loki's tie.

"That's because mine's more complicated," Loki said, popping the words playfully. His hand curled around Tony's cock, warm against his burning hot skin. Tony wanted to chase the sensation, and it was distracting as he fumbled with Loki's tie pin. Loki raised an eyebrow, fighting the grin on his lips.

Tony thrust up into Loki's hand as he managed to win the tie pin. He carelessly tossed it onto the floor, undoing the tie with shaky impatience. "One day I'm just going to do you in the full suit," Tony muttered, feverishly unbuttoning Loki's waistcoat.

"I look forward to that."

Tony blinked. Loki was entirely serious. Tony had meant it as banter, but this... "Alright," Tony said, hiding his grin by kissing Loki's neck. He grabbed Loki's hair, maneuvering his head to get a better angle as he slipped the shirt buttons free. Loki was utterly pliant and relaxed as he let Tony undress him. Tony closed his eyes, the salty tang of Loki's skin on his lips as he felt his way down Loki's chest, unbuttoning the rest of the shirt as Loki stroked him.

Tony sat back as he drew Loki's shirt open. He knew that Loki didn't enjoy him staring at his chest, but his head was a little too hazy to remember. As Loki pulled the sleeves off and discarded the shirt, Tony pushed him onto the mattress so he could take one of the soft pink nipples between his lips. Loki moaned in surprise, twisting beneath him. He grasped Tony's neck. "What about the rest of me," he breathed out.

"We'll get there," Tony answered. It felt like ages, but in reality it was only seconds that Tony took to kiss down his chest, eager to free him from his pants. Tony shuffled down the bed, head spinning with lust as he caught Loki's familiar scent. Tony didn't waste any time undressing him, or redirecting him to the center of the bed so he could go down between his legs.

"I didn't think you'd start with that," Loki thought aloud as Tony buried his nose in the juncture

between his thigh and hip.

He breathed in, enjoying the heady musk of arousal and bare skin. “Yeah, well take notes, okay? I haven’t gotten enough chances to teach you.”

“I will endeavor to do my best.”

Tony’s tongue traced down the length of his cock as fingers slid into his hair, nails brushing against his scalp. Tony greedily took the head in his mouth, sucking and laving at the slit. His eyes fell shut as he took Loki as deep as he could. Pushing himself was a high of its own, and Loki’s hands pulling him closer as an unfiltered groan broke free of Loki’s lips another reward. “Tony,” Loki gasped, one leg half curling around him.

Tony hummed around the cock in his mouth. Loki’s hips twitched up towards him. The leg around him pulled Tony in closer. Tony would’ve laughed if his mouth hadn’t been full, he was so damn proud of himself for making Loki so excited. Instead, Tony set a rhythm, luxuriating in it. He drew his hands over Loki’s waist and hips, grasping at his thighs. “Tony,” Loki said, louder and slightly more attention seeking.

Reluctantly, Tony pulled off and glanced up to find Loki flushed and panting against his pillow, eyes squeezed shut. Tony stared at the swollen cock beneath him. A fresh bead of pre come slid down from the head, catching the light. Tony wanted to taste it. He wanted Loki in his mouth again, but then a hand grabbed his wrist.

This time, Loki’s eyes were set on him, certain. “Now.”

Excitement sparked through Tony as he nodded, crawling across the bed to grab the condom and lube neatly laid out on Loki’s bedside table. Tony had the muscle memory down for putting it on, and he barely glanced at himself. Instead, he watched the way Loki’s eyes traveled over him, lingering, expression somewhere between calculating and longing.

Loki dragged a pillow beneath his hips. His curls tangled around his face on the other pillow as his green eyes set on Tony. A soft smile crossed his lips. Tony found himself returning a full grin, moved by the gentle, affectionate way Loki looked up at him. There couldn’t be that many people who got to see Loki with that expression. Tony set his hands on Loki’s bent knees. “Alright babe,” he said, stopping himself at that because he knew he’d be babbling if he let himself get started.

Tony traced one finger in a slow circle around the puckered skin only to find that it was already slicked and wet. “I thought it would be easier to be ready,” Loki explained, avoiding eye contact.

“It is,” Tony reassured him, immediately distracted by the heat radiating against his fingers. The second slid in without a problem. “I just wouldn’t have minded doing it.”

Loki set one hand beside his head. Tony’s own arousal filled the silence, fogging his mind with want. Loki was ready and open and yearning for him. Tony settled between his legs, somewhat in disbelief. He’d wanted this for ages. It was odd to suddenly find himself here. “Give me something to write about,” Loki said. Tony realized he’d been staring as he looked up to find Loki smiling a bit, teasing him.

“Oh, you know I will,” Tony said.

He was extra generous with the lube before he lined up, heart beating sporadically in his chest. The head eased in and the tight heat made Tony gasp, clutching Loki’s knees a little too tight. He forced his eyes open. Loki was lying still, watching him. “Okay?”

Loki nodded.

Tony sank in a little further, sweat slipping down his spine as the tight heat enveloped him. His eyes locked with Loki's again. It was unreal how intense it felt. Not because of the action, but because of the way Loki returned that intensity, holding Tony's dark brown eyes in his emotionally charged gaze. Loki trusted him. And not only that, he was demonstrating that trust by lying suppliantly beneath him, giving up the control he so often needed to have.

Tony reached for Loki's hand, warm fingers folding in over the back of his own hand.

A slow curl of a smile appeared on Loki's lips. "You really are stunning," he mumbled.

"You're figuring that out now?" Tony joked, pushing in a bit deeper. Loki drew in a breath, eyelids fluttering for a moment. "Okay?" Loki hummed in the affirmative. Tony was fighting the desire to drive right in, but if Loki were any tighter it would hurt.

He was gorgeous, head tilted back as he held Tony's hand. Tony held his hip, admiring his bare skin, the flushes of pink, the slick along his cock as it lay flushed and hard against his pale stomach. Loki had his other hand hidden beneath his pillow, the fabric pulled in taut lines towards him.

Tony breathed in, shuddering. If he kept thinking, he was going to come too soon. Tony pushed into the warm heat, then felt his hand squeezed tight. He paused. "It's okay," Loki muttered, releasing the painful grip on his hand. His cheeks were dark red. "Please."

Tony took it for desire, chasing his own, but the moment he was close to bottoming out nails were biting into the back of his hand. "Don't stop," Loki breathed out.

Tony rubbed a soothing circle against Loki's hip, but the feeling had flipped. It hurt to hold still. Loki was too tight suddenly, and as much as he was telling Tony to go on, the furrow in his brow and the tension that was becoming as clear as day were all wrong.

Carefully, Tony started to withdraw. "Hey," Tony practically cooed. "Hey." He brushed his fingers against the hand gripping his too tightly again. "You look uncomfortable."

Loki's eyes snapped open wide, startled.

Then Loki stared at him, worrying his bottom lip.

Tony offered him a smile in response, expression kind and soft.

"I'm fine," Loki said. He let out a shuddering breath, taking hold of Tony's hand and drawing it towards his chest. His cheeks were ruddy and he looked exhausted. "Don't stop."

Tony had said to talk to him. Loki smiled at him again, reassuring him. Tony believed him. "Alright," Tony murmured, angling Loki's leg slightly to try and make it easier. The muscle was tense beneath his fingertips.

As Tony started to ease his way back in, Loki's head dropped back. He squeezed his eyes shut. Despite how much Tony had wanted this, he felt unsettled.

He held still. No. This...this was all wrong. Loki looked like he was in pain and that wasn't how this was supposed to go.

"It hurts, doesn't it?"

Loki blinked his eyes open to find Tony staring at him with a slightly reproachful expression. For a moment Loki just stared back at him before something changed in his expression and he answered.

“Like hell.” He smiled, self-conscious, but Tony felt nothing in response except for crushing disappointment.

Tony carefully withdrew. The relief in Loki’s body was unmistakable. As Tony started to pull away from him though, Loki immediately sat up, wincing. “Just give me a moment—”

“—Lo,” Tony said, grabbing his shoulder. He was close enough to Loki to kiss him. “Let’s try again later.”

Loki’s eyebrows bowed together, a mix of worry and fear. “Tony, I just need a moment.” Tony hated how there was a slight plea in his voice. Loki gripped his shoulders instead, imploring almost, but his eyes were feverishly analytical, trying to read Tony.

“It’s okay,” Tony said. Suddenly, he was feeling hurt, and he didn’t really understand why. Everything had been fine a minute ago. “I don’t want to do this like this.”

“Do what like this?”

“With you lying,” Tony said, the words out of his mouth before he could even think about them. The scheduling this happening and Loki already prepping himself before Tony even showed up and the bedside table set up for it, it was all such a need for control that it had him feeling like maybe Loki didn’t actually trust him after all. He hated it.

Loki’s hands went lax against his shoulders, but he didn’t withdraw them. He turned his head to the side, but Tony still felt Loki’s breath ghost over his skin as he spoke. “I don’t want you to be disappointed.”

“Do you really think I’m like that?” Tony couldn’t help it. He felt super fucking offended all of a sudden.

“No,” Loki said, softer, lightly kneading the muscle in Tony’s shoulder with one hand. “I don’t.” He drew in a noisy breath. “But *I* wanted this to go perfectly for you because you’ve been so patient.” Oh. “And I thought if I just gave it a chance, it would be. I wasn’t *lying* to you, or at least, not maliciously.” His hand stilled. “And I think if you give me a little more time to try, it’ll be fine. I just need to adjust.”

As quickly as it had come, Tony found himself winding down again.

Loki made him feel more vulnerable and emotional than anyone he’d been with, and Tony didn’t understand it. As far as sex went, this didn’t rank as an impressive act on Tony’s list, and yet it felt as intense to him as some of his wildest nights. Maybe that’s why it hurt so much that Loki hadn’t been forthcoming.

Loki leaned in, his lips gently pressing to Tony’s in comfort, lingering. Tony sighed wistfully when Loki pulled away. His shoulders drooped in Loki’s hands. He felt spent.

“Let’s try again,” Loki said, tracing his fingers along the back of Tony’s neck.

Tony shook his head. “I’m not in the mood anymore.” Loki tensed, but Tony wrapped his arms around Loki. He tucked his nose into the crook of Loki’s neck.

Now he could hear Loki’s heart absolutely pounding in his chest. It was that vulnerable thing

again. Tony wouldn't have gotten like this with other people. He didn't know why he was upset, but he was a bit. He just knew he definitely didn't want to keep trying. Not right now. Loki was quiet, his fingers combing through Tony's hair like a reflex. After a while, Loki sighed. "I am sorry."

Tony breathed in.

"I want you to tell me if you don't like something," Tony mumbled. Loki should've known that already. Tony hated having the image of Loki lying on the bed in pain, not saying anything about it, in his head. He was kind of pissed about it.

"Truly Tony, I did not yet feel at the point where I wanted to tell you to stop."

"Well maybe you need to work on where that point is," Tony retorted. It slipped out harsher than he'd intended. He pulled away from the comfort of Loki's neck to find Loki frowning at him with his lips pinched tightly together. "I mean—" Tony looked away. It'd be too easy to make a huge mess out of this, and it didn't have to be one. "I get pushing yourself, but when I tell you to talk to me, I'm kind of depending on you for that."

Tony searched for the right words, trying to figure out what was going on for himself so that he could tell Loki. "I—I've got to be able to trust you to tell me and be honest. Don't worry about hurting my feelings or any of that other stuff. We can't try other stuff either if I can't trust you to do that."

Loki didn't answer right away, clearly thinking it over. Tony let himself take comfort in having Loki's arms around him, marveling at how he could still take that comfort from it even when he was kinda irked with Loki. Then Loki sighed, the irritation in his expression fizzing out. "Point taken," he said. There wasn't any bite to it. "I didn't mean to upset you."

"I know," Tony said, relieved a bit.

Loki traced his fingers against the sheets. "Shall we watch Star Trek on the couch instead?" He offered.

"That sounds good," Tony agreed. As Tony pulled away, Loki was frowning, his expression so much dimmer than before. He didn't say anything though.

They changed into pajamas, and when they started for the couch Tony saw that Loki had a cigarette clasped between his fingers. "I'm fighting an impulse," he told Tony, noticing his obvious staring. Tony sat down, both needing and resenting the space on the couch between them.

It didn't feel awkward enough to consider leaving, but Tony didn't feel settled either.

About halfway through the episode, Tony closed the gap. Loki's arm came down around him, still clasping the unlit cigarette. He leaned in against Tony. "I would like to try again, another time. I did like how you were."

Tony set his hands together. "Okay."

"I knew better," Loki said. "I'm sorry, Tony. I know you listen, but perhaps I need to work on speaking. It did not occur to me that I would hesitate to say something because ordinarily I do not have any trouble saying anything."

"It's okay," Tony said. He hated having Loki apologize to him, especially when he sounded so remorseful about it. Tony'd kind of been watching the episode and forgetting about it, but hearing

Loki speak, he didn't think that Loki had caught a single part of the episode. He'd just been thinking the whole time. "I'm sorry," Tony said, feeling like he needed to return it. "I guess I kind of didn't like the idea that you were trying to be perfect for me, like I'd put that pressure on you."

"But you want things to be perfect for me as well sometimes, do you not?" Loki had a point. "Of course we both want that," Loki said. "Reasonable or not."

"Yeah," Tony said. It was just that usually Tony had wanted things to go perfectly for himself. He wanted a perfect night out, he wanted a one night stand with the perfect ass or who'd blow him perfect. Sure, Tony took pride in his ability and making sure that whoever he brought into his bed felt good and had a good time. But it hadn't been all about them.

But wanting things to go perfectly for the other person too, well, it was true with Loki. Tony had wanted the evening to go well for himself, he had. But he'd also wanted it to go well for Loki. He'd wanted to show Loki how good it could be, and it hadn't been.

Tony already knew he was head over heels for Loki. It was just that figuring it out sometimes to try and make it close to perfect sucked.

Loki's hand snuck in with Tony's. "We'll do better next time," Loki said, reassuring them both.

Tony found his humor return. "That's almost a guarantee." Seriously, it was. Tony knew that.

Loki breathed out a soft little laugh. "I guess it is."

Feeling better, Tony started to yawn. "I suppose we have work in the morning," Loki said, watching him.

Tony groaned. "Don't remind me." He rubbed his eye. "I realized on the drive over here that I'm going to have to swing by my place in the morning anyway because I forgot some stuff for work. What time are you waking up tomorrow?"

Loki's expression was thoughtful, but it vanished the moment that Tony turned his head towards him. "Five-thirty."

Tony swore that Loki was running on fumes half of the time. Tony usually cut it as close as he could getting up in the morning for work so that he could sleep. "I'll get up when you get up," Tony said, slightly disgusted. That was way too damn early, but it meant he'd get his ass out of bed and still have time to swing home before work.

To his surprise, Loki chuckled. "Am I going to have to prod you awake?"

Tony scowled. "I get up on my own sometimes. And you sleep in on the weekends, don't lie."

Loki seemed to think better of saying anything. Tony knew Loki didn't believe him. "Let's watch another episode though. I'm not ready to sleep yet," Tony said.

Loki nodded, grabbing the remote.

Tony chewed on his lip. Loki's arm came around him and pulled him closer. Tony stopped. Loki was right. They'd do better next time.

Chapter 43

They'd made plans to see Shakespeare in the park, and Tony had been looking forward to it. When Tony knocked on the door of Loki's apartment, Loki was putting on his shoes.

He stood up, checking his pockets. Loki padded his jacket. "Hold on," he said. "I forgot my phone." As he hurried back towards his bedroom, Tony stared at the massive painting on the wall.

The gold flecks of paint on the black background were nice to look at. It was all abstract, so there wasn't one point to focus on. Tony followed a brushstroke down to the bottom of the canvas where he noticed something for the first time.

"Loki!"

"Lo-ki!" Tony called, drawing his voice out into a yell.

Loki rushed into the room, tucking his phone into his pocket. "What?" He demanded, wide-eyed.

Tony pointed to the bottom of the canvas.

Loki turned towards the spot. After a moment, he smoothed his tie against his chest with an indifferent expression.

"Ikol?" Tony asked. "That's your name backwards. *You* painted this."

Loki stood up taller. "And that's worth yelling at me from across the apartment? I thought something had caught fire." He drew his keys from another pocket, jingling them. "Let's get going," he said, completely unimpressed with Tony's discovery.

"You acted like you got rid of all of them," Tony said. He set his hands on his hips, positively gloating like he'd discovered some huge secret.

"I believe I said that one of my old paintings was at my mother's." Loki pulled open the front door. "I didn't say it was the only one in existence."

Tony looked from Loki to the painting and back again.

"We'll be late," Loki told him.

"Where are the other ones?" Tony asked, finally walking through the door but not without giving Loki another look of triumph.

As Loki locked his door, a few strands of hair fell against his face. "I made that one because anything I could buy at the time was too dull and ill-suited." He started for the elevator, Tony in tow. "I truly don't paint anymore. You act as if I'm hiding my own sistine chapel somewhere."

"Maybe you are," Tony said.

Loki sighed, but it seemed like he wanted to laugh.

"Why didn't you just write your name?" Tony asked.

Loki took a moment to think, the elevator chiming open in the meantime. "I suppose I like knowing people's genuine reactions." He stepped inside. "Or maybe it was just a habit."

Tony didn't know what to say. Honestly, he felt kind of proud of himself for noticing. The elevator pinged with each passing floor. "Don't ask me to paint you something," Loki warned him, as if that's what Tony was building up to.

Tony seized on it. "Even if it's a naked portrait of me?"

"Yes, Tony. I believe we've been over that."

Tony huffed, but inside he was beaming.

When they got to the park, Loki managed to work them into a good spot so that their picnic blanket was front and center. Around them, people were unpacking lunches and some had brought their dogs. The place was packed and filled with a low, murmuring chatter even as the play started.

Tony was pretty much glued to the show. Not so much because of what it was, and he'd passed his lit classes with flying colors so he understood it all thank you very much, but because three of the leading actors were smoking hot and Tony was having a damn good time watching them.

Loki was paying close attention too. His laugh was always a split second before the rest of the audience really got going. Tony picked with his straw at the frozen lemonade he'd bought, eyes set on the stage.

When the play ended, Tony's lemonade was mostly melted. Loki was stretched out on the picnic blanket. He didn't look like he was ready to move yet. People milled around them, ruffling their picnic blankets clean of dry grass clippings. "What'd you think of it?" Tony asked.

"I liked it. The set wasn't my favorite, but I suppose you have the liberty to make it look however you want when they're in the fairy realm."

"It looked kind of pretentious," Tony summarized.

"It did," Loki agreed, smiling. He pushed his sunglasses back up against his face. "Do you want to grab something to eat?"

"There's a place near here that only does chicken. It's really good." Tony hadn't been there in a while so the idea of going was exciting. "We should go now before the dinner crowd gets big."

Tony set his lemonade to the side as they got up from the blanket, brushing it off before folding it. Loki held the neatly packed square as Tony grabbed his drink. He played with the few pieces of floating ice, twirling them with his straw as they walked towards the car. "I wasn't sure that we were going to get to see this," Tony said. "There was rain in the forecast up until yesterday."

"I hadn't looked," Loki said.

"Have you been busy at work?" Tony glanced over. Loki had been slightly more reserved the past few days, but Tony had been too. Even though they'd talked, it hadn't spared Tony from feeling a little awkward after the fact of what'd happened. Well, not awkward so much. Apprehensive. That was probably a better word. But if he was guessing, he'd say that Loki was the one that felt more awkward between them.

Loki brushed his hand over his pulled back hair. "Sif's been out the last couple days with a family emergency. Her replacement has been—" Loki paused, deliberating. "Eager to please. She finds the most mild excuse to stop by my office. Sif should be back on Monday—" Tony stumbled over

something in the sidewalk, tripping and spilling lemonade all over his shirt. He caught himself in time not to fall down, but barely. “—Are you alright?”

Ice nipped through Tony’s soaking wet shirt. He winced, then looked down at his shirt. His favorite fucking shirt, that now looked like he’d worked out in it. Instantly, his mood plummeted. “Yeah,” Tony said, flicking bits of crushed ice from his shirt.

Loki’s hand set on his shoulder. “I’ll give you one of my shirts.”

“It’s probably going to stain,” Tony complained, convinced that it would. “This is from the first Black Sabbath concert I went to. I can’t replace it.”

“Your drink was mostly water,” Loki reassured him. “It’ll be fine.”

“The lemon’s going to bleach it,” Tony said. He chucked the drink cup in a trashcan. “Fuck.” Shit. This sucked. He was soaking wet and this sucked.

“Then let’s go back to your place since it’s closest,” Loki said. “We can throw it in the laundry. It’ll be fine.” They kept walking, Tony fussing with the wet fabric.

Tony wanted to shove honey barbecue chicken in his face. He didn’t want to go back to his place yet, but he also didn’t want his shirt ruined. They’d reached Loki’s car, and Loki had stopped beside it with a concerned expression before Tony realized they’d gotten to it. As he made eye contact with Loki, Loki simply turned away and pulled open his car door.

He leaned inside, digging through several hanging shirts with plastic bags from the dry cleaner. “Here,” Loki said, selecting one from the middle. “Put this on.”

He’d switched into authoritative work mode, but Tony found himself going along with it. He peeled the soaked shirt off. Tony glanced over to find Loki’s intrigued gaze lingering on him, but his eyes darted away in polite guilt the second Tony’s head was up. Ridiculous. Loki was absolutely ridiculous. There was no reason for Loki to be bashful about lusting over him, and it definitely wasn’t like he’d never seen it before. Hell, he’d seen way more.

Suddenly, Tony found himself wanting to laugh. He didn’t, but he felt better. Somewhat.

Tony buttoned up the shirt, rolling the sleeves up. The dress shirt wasn’t exactly ideal in the sweltering sun. “Let’s go,” Loki said, walking around to get in behind the wheel.

He drove with a sort of urgency as they left the park. Tony’s shirt was in his lap, crumpled into a ball. “It’s fine,” Tony said. “It’s just a shirt.”

“It’s your favorite shirt,” Loki said. “It’s fine to run back and stick it in the wash.” Tony sort of smiled, realizing that Loki knew it was his favorite.

“But we—”

“—We’re going to your place. I’m already headed in that direction.”

Tony did smile then. He turned to look out the window, feeling a little silly, but cared for too. Loki reached for the radio.

It’d been playing some bland top 40 song for a couple minutes when Tony piped up. “So, uh, you were saying that Sif will be back on Monday?”

“Yes.” Tony couldn’t read Loki’s expression when Loki was in profile to him with his sunglasses on.

“Where’s the new girl going to go?”

“The new—Sif’s replacement? She’ll go back down to her regular work in HR.” Tony turned that piece of information over.

“Was she cute?”

Loki breathed out a laugh that was something like a wheeze and scoffing. “Tony,” he exclaimed. “I didn’t tell you to make you jealous. I was complaining.”

Tony pursed his lips a little. It wasn’t that he thought Loki would cheat on him. “Was she cute though?”

“I suppose,” Loki offered. His long fingers glided across the steering wheel as he turned down a street. “She was probably your age.”

Tony crossed his arms over his chest. Loki’s dress shirt folded with the motion at odd angles, starched and uncomfortable.

“Have you ordered any new Star Trek models to work on?” Loki asked.

“No. I’m kind of running out of places to put things.” His living room was littered with parts and tools, now that he thought about it. And Loki was going to see the mess since Tony hadn’t planned on them going back to his place. Shit. He knew it didn’t really matter, but he wanted it to look nice. “I guess I could get a shelf for them or something. Then I’d really look like a collector.”

“We should find something to go to that’s similar to the night the planetarium had.”

That was a wonderful idea, actually. “I’m going to start looking for something,” Tony said. He pulled out his phone, becoming absorbed in online listings. It wasn’t until they were parked outside of his apartment that he started paying attention again.

The first thing Tony did when he got inside was return Loki’s borrowed shirt. “I’m just going to wash my shirt in the sink,” Tony told him. He was standing bare chested with his favorite shirt crumpled in his hands. “If I start a load of laundry in the downstairs laundry room here, somebody else’ll probably pull it all out to make room for their stuff if I’m not there right away. I don’t want us to have to hang around here waiting on it.”

“It’s fine if you want to,” Loki offered.

Tony shook his head. “I’ll wash it in my sink and hang it up in the bathroom. Just hang tight for a second.” Tony rushed off before Loki said anything. He scoured his shirt with laundry detergent, scrubbing frantically and rinsing it only to start over again. Instantly it became an outlet for the restlessness he felt. It was only when Tony stopped to hang his shirt up to dry that he paused.

Tony stared at the shirt. Did Loki think he was strange for making a fuss over it? Tony set one hand on his hip.

Well, whatever. He went to his bedroom and threw on another t-shirt before going to find Loki.

He was laying on the couch, tossing a stress ball for Dummy to fetch while he read something on his phone. He looked up when Tony cleared his throat. “Is your shirt alright?”

“Yeah.” Tony rubbed the back of his neck. “You want to head back to that chicken place or go somewhere else?”

Loki’s lips twitched at the corner of his mouth. His stare felt intense, but Tony couldn’t tell what he was thinking. “Are you hungry?” Tony shrugged. “Because I was thinking,” Loki said, sitting up. “That we could go to the park by here and walk around the lake. It’s nice out.”

“Sure.”

Loki gracefully rose from the couch and started towards the door. After Tony locked the door to his apartment, Loki held open the building’s main door for him.

They were quiet as they drove to the park, although Tony threw out names of cities that were having Star Trek conventions and Loki said something about the city if he’d been there.

The park wasn’t too crowded when they arrived. A cool breeze blew off the surface of the lake. They started on the paved trail, a bicyclist whizzing past them, bell chiming.

Tony tucked his hands in his pockets. For a while they said nothing.

Maybe it was because of his shirt, but Tony felt off. The whole day had seemed off, somehow. He watched the ducks out on the calm water, stuck in the off feeling.

Then Loki veered off the trail, taking a dusty little path through the tall grass. Tony nearly missed him. He wandered after Loki until they came to a quiet spot under a tree on the rocky shore of the lake.

Loki knelt down and scooped up a pebble. He drew his thumb over the flat, polished stone. “I’ll bet you something,” Loki said, looking back over his shoulder. “If you can skip a stone more times than me.”

Tony looked down at the ground. There were hundreds of oblong rocks, mixed with broken pieces of plastic and a few rusted bottle caps. He bent down, scooping up a soft orange one. “You’ll what?” Tony prompted Loki. “What’re you betting?”

Loki grinned, holding Tony’s gaze the way that made his stomach flutter every damn time. “Whoever wins can place a kiss on the other wherever they’d like.”

Tony broke into a small smile, incredulous and amused. It was a tame bet, but he liked it. “Yeah. Alright.” He stepped up beside Loki. “You know, I have a pretty good grasp on physics,” Tony said, chucking the stone out across the lake. “Five,” Tony announced.

Loki watched the ripples, seemingly calculating his odds. “Best of nine,” he told Tony.

Tony stuck his thumbs through his belt loops. “Nine?” He raised his eyebrows at Loki. “That doesn’t seem very confident.”

“Nine,” Loki repeated, tossing his stone at the lake.

It fell in with a plop.

“Yeah, you’re going to need the nine,” Tony said.

Loki gave his arm a little shove in retaliation, rolling his eyes even as a smile was on his lips. He bent down and retrieved a stone. Tony took a little more time, carefully selecting a handful of

them.

Tony tossed his out onto the lake, satisfied at the six it got. Loki seemed more determined, tossing it in with a bit too much force. Tony didn't tell him that though. It skipped once, then sank.

Tony just smiled. He didn't rub it in, but he did feel self-assured as he took his turn. This time he got nine. Loki let out a huff under his breath. He dug through the stones beneath their feet and pulled out a relatively flat one. Loki threw it. The stone sunk without a single skip. "Are you sure you don't want to just give in?" Tony asked, unable to hold himself back now.

"Positive," Loki said, scowling at the rocks beneath his feet.

"Okay," Tony said. He held his arm out, carefully aiming at the water. He wasn't sure how he was going to use the kiss when he won, but he did know that he'd like to win. Tony released his grip for the stone to go flying just as Loki's hand grabbed for his wrist.

The stone hit the water with a plop. "Cheater!" Tony exclaimed. Loki laughed, still holding Tony's wrist.

"I believe it's my turn," Loki said, tossing his stone even as Tony yanked his wrist free. It skipped a couple times before sinking. "That's one to three," he declared proudly.

"Uh, it's three zero because you cheated."

"I acted creatively," Loki corrected him, stooping back down to retrieve another stone. Tony stared wearily at him, then took a step away. When he was sure that Loki wasn't going to grab for his wrist again, he tossed the stone.

Loki went to snatch it out of the air and missed, his finger grazing the side of the stone instead. It crashed into the water with a loud splash. "Cheating!" Tony crowed, Loki's laughter drowning him out. Loki skipped his across the water before Tony got a chance to retaliate. It skipped four times before sinking, and Loki looked positively gleeful.

"Y'know, I'd just let you win, but you're cheating," Tony told him. "So now I *have* to win." He stomped out of Loki's reach. His boyfriend only watched, eyes dancing with delight. "Cheater," Tony grumbled. He tossed the stone at the lake only for it to skip twice and sink.

Loki won the round fair and square then with three.

Tony kept his distance, holding his breath as he tossed the next one. The stone made it three times. Loki's skidded across its path a second later, beating Tony by two.

Tony rushed to throw the next one. It skid across the surface of the lake with seven. "Beat that," Tony called to Loki.

"I intend to."

He didn't.

Loki started walking towards him. "Don't," Tony warned him. "Don't you—"

"—I'm lending moral support," Loki said. "I'm not doing anything—"

Tony didn't have anywhere else to go. If he took another step he'd fall into the sticks and brambles at the end of the pebbled alcove. Deciding that his best shot was to just toss it, Tony threw it at the

lake as Loki stretched his long arms out towards Tony. Unsurprisingly, the stone didn't skip at all. It sank with a wet plop as Tony complained about Loki throwing his arms around him, laughing as he clung to Tony. "If that thing doesn't skip we're still tied," Tony informed him.

Tony reached for Loki's throwing arm just as Loki tossed it. It skipped once. Tony stared at the spot on the lake, offended. "That's not fair," Tony said.

"Sure it is," Loki said, taking a step back. He was positively gloating. Tony was feeling competitive, so he wasn't exactly happy to give it up. Yet he found himself curious about what Loki would do with the bet.

"When we get home it'd better be damn well worth cheating," Tony told him, plucky as he stared up at Loki.

Loki stared back down at him, a smirk tugging at his lips. "Oh," he said, a few octaves lower. "I think I'll have my prize now." He grabbed the collar of Tony's shirt, bending down and planting a kiss on Tony's lips. Starstruck. Tony felt utterly starstruck as Loki's warm lips pressed to his, cruelly closed but unbearably adoring. It only lasted a moment, but Tony was left with soft brown doe eyes and burning cheeks when it ended, his shirt going slack as Loki's fingers released it.

At first, Tony just stood there, lips parted as if to catch his breath with a dazed look in his eyes. When his attention fixed on Loki, Loki was only smiling back, bright and confident. "Let's go," he said, as if he couldn't tell how affected Tony was by the small gesture. "We still have a lot of the trail left to walk."

Tony stumbled after him, breaking into a goofy smile the moment Loki's back was to him. Suddenly he was buoyant. He caught up to Loki's pace beside him on the trail.

"This was a good idea," Tony said.

"I thought you were mad that I cheated," Loki teased, air quoting the word cheated as if it weren't true.

Tony made a show out of sighing. "I mean coming to the park." He smiled openly at Loki then. "And skipping stones was an okay idea."

"Okay," Loki repeated skeptically.

Tony wasn't going to take the bait. Instead he nudged Loki with his shoulder. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Loki smile and got the impression that he was relieved. Tony wasn't sure why though, so he figured that he hadn't quite caught it right. "We could always make another bet if you'd like," Loki said.

It was tempting. "I think I'm done with betting for one day," Tony said. "Besides, who knows. Maybe I'd be tempted to let you win."

"That wouldn't be so bad."

The silence that settled as they walked was a contented one for the first time that day. Tony was relaxed when he asked, "So did you get around to ordering that stuff? It's been a while since I helped you pick it out."

"It's been sitting on my kitchen counter in the shipping envelope all week."

"All week," Tony scolded him. When Loki actually seemed a little cowed Tony immediately

added, "So what's in it?"

Loki smiled. "You know that it's supposed to be a surprise."

"And I will be very surprised when you tell me."

"Do you really want me to tell you?"

"No." Tony kind of got the feeling that if he said yes, Loki would tell him. "But I do want to see it when we go back."

Loki was quiet for a moment. His voice was softer, more serious when he spoke. "You said that I needed to work on where my point is at that I'm pushing myself too far, and I've been wondering how I should know that point when I'm not sure what to expect. You—how do you decide?"

Tony short circuited for a second. It felt like Loki was asking him a way too easy question, but he recognized that Loki was asking him for advice. And that was humbling. And sweet, in its own sort of way. So Tony took some time to consider his answer.

"Well, if it hurts, you should definitely say something. Unless you want it to hurt? But then I should be clued in on that, and it'd have to be something we'd figure out together, you know?" A bicyclist passed them and Tony found himself silent, even though they were speaking quietly and he doubted they'd be heard.

After they'd passed he continued, "I guess it comes down to what you're comfortable with. There's a difference between being unsure and forcing yourself to do something you're not really comfortable with. If you—" Tony took a deep breath. "I mean, just be honest with yourself, you know? Don't do something you don't want to do. I said that last time because it was clear that you weren't comfortable with what you were doing."

Loki didn't answer right away, and Tony could tell that Loki was thinking hard about what he'd said. "I wouldn't be able to do anything if I didn't venture outside of my comfort zone."

"Maybe just tell me when you are outside that comfort zone," Tony said.

Loki let out a breathy sound that Tony couldn't really interpret.

"Uhm," Tony said, buying time while he thought of another way to explain. "You've tried plenty of new things with me and they've worked out, you know? This doesn't have to be different."

"It feels different," Loki said. Tony glanced towards him, surprised. "You were very—" Loki looked away, deliberating. "Intense. Emotional?" Loki seemed dissatisfied with both words. "I could tell that it meant something significant to you," he said softly.

Tony stared out over the lake, feeling exposed. "It's not a bad thing," Loki added. "I liked it, actually." Loki surprised him for the second time. Tony turned to find a hesitant smile on Loki's lips. "I love seeing you like that."

Tony licked his lips, a little stunned. He didn't know what to say, so he just said what he was thinking. "I'm normally not that emotional during sex." He thought suddenly to look around, but no one was near them on the trail. Loki was waiting, patiently listening. "I'm not really used to seeing the person again the next day," he said self-consciously. He didn't know if he dared to tell Loki how bewilderingly strange it was to get so emotional during something that used to be reassuringly simple.

“So now you feel like you have to get it right, since you’ll see me again,” Loki guessed.

“No,” Tony said immediately. That was way off. “It’s not like that.” A bird flew across and landed in a tree beside them. “It’s because you know, it’s you,” Tony said, feeling lame.

“Oh.”

Tony turned to find Loki with his shoulders hunched inward and a poorly masked hurt on his face. “Not in a bad way, Loki, sheesh! Because I care about you. This is too serious. Ask me something stupid instead.”

Loki laughed then. “I thought when you said that you meant because I am inexperienced, comparatively. I know that you care.”

“Good. The caring part,” Tony clarified, looking away. “I’m glad you know.” Man, this conversation was embarrassing.

Loki’s arm came around his shoulders. It was a little awkward with how they were walking, but Tony leaned into it anyway. “I love you, Tony.” Loki’s voice was so warm that Tony found himself grinning like an idiot. “And I think when we get back to my place, I will ask you to teach me that thing you’ve been wanting me to practice.”

“That thing,” Tony said. Then it clicked. “Did you take notes last time?”

“Yes. I made a spread sheet and everything,” Loki snarked. Tony laughed.

“As long as you’re not all teeth, I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

“Hmm. That’s disappointing.”

“Loki,” Tony scolded him, and only got a laugh in reply.

It wasn’t until much later that they got back to Loki’s place. First they went out to dinner and then somewhere else for dessert. It was like the unease from earlier in the day had evaporated. They were back to their usual selves. Tony didn’t forget about the surprise. As it turned out, Loki had gotten the green set and the red panties. “I’m keeping these,” Tony told him, snatching the package and pressing it to his chest. “The next time you see these, I’ll be wearing them.”

“And when would that be?” Loki asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Tony asked. Loki sighed, but he made no effort to win them back from Tony. Instead, Tony had a wonderful night running his fingers through Loki’s hair and muttering soft praises and suggestions, grasping at the couch armrest instead when it became too much. When it was Tony’s turn, Loki came almost instantly. For a moment Tony rested his head on Loki’s thigh, contentedly watching him pant. Loki’s lax fingers combed through his hair. “Did you take any notes?”

A beautiful smile lit Loki’s face. “Didn’t you see me writing them down?”

“Let me see them,” Tony replied.

Loki just let his head fall back against the couch as he smirked at Tony’s quip, eyes falling shut. Tony pressed a few lingering kisses to his thighs, breathing in deeply before crawling up onto the

couch beside him. When Loki's arm came around him Tony set his head on Loki's chest. All things considered, he felt they were doing pretty damn well.

Chapter 44

Tony grasped the sheets, nails scratching against the fabric as sweat rolled down his skin. Loki was pressed flush against his back. “Tony,” he groaned. A fresh shiver struck down Tony’s spine. He was panting, face flushed, Loki buried deep inside him. “Tony,” Loki murmured again, one hand grasping Tony’s hip as another stroked through Tony’s sweat slicked hair. His labored breath drifted against the back of Tony’s neck.

Tony rolled his hips against the sheets, blissfully overheated as Loki’s lips returned to his neck. Tony’s eyes fluttered shut. He wanted to beg for more, but he also didn’t want it to end. Loki had initiated when they’d woken up, and Tony was still riding the high of how adoring Loki had been as he’d showered Tony with lazy morning kisses.

An involuntary groan broke free of Tony’s throat as Loki’s teeth grazed his skin. “Bite me,” Tony breathed out.

A soft laugh was breathed out beside his ear. “No seriously,” Tony pleaded, squeezing the blanket in his hand as he arched his neck back, spine bowing against the mattress and drawing Loki’s weight down with it. He felt Loki’s lips against his pulse, teeth teasing along his skin as Tony gasped for air, and just as he wasn’t expecting it, Loki nipped at his shoulder, holding the bite as his hips rolled sensually against him.

It was more than Tony could take. He came to a moment later, still blinking the stars from his eyes as Loki’s tongue played at the spot. “I haven’t come that hard in ages,” Tony murmured, dropping his face down into the pillow. His whole body went limp.

“You said that last time,” Loki muttered back in quiet amusement. A retort was on the tip of Tony’s tongue but then Loki was grasping his hips and starting to move again.

Even though it wasn’t nearly as fun after he’d come, Tony liked the closeness. He wanted to feel helpless and spent as Loki rode him. “Harder,” Tony said into the pillow.

“You also say that every—” Loki gasped. It was easy to imagine the way his jaw would drop open as his eyes squeezed shut. Tony had memorized it the first chance he’d gotten. “Time.”

Tony just repeated his command. Loki was agonizingly slow, even though he’d picked up the pace, and Tony found himself absently wondering if there’d be a round two. But then he heard the beautiful sound of Loki’s moaning as his hips stilled.

Tony didn’t want to move when Loki pulled out. He kept his face buried in the pillow as he felt Loki’s weight leave the bed, only to return and curl around Tony, delicately tracing the spot where he’d bitten Tony’s shoulder. “I don’t care if there’s a mark,” Tony said.

“There won’t be,” Loki answered. It’d been too gentle and careful for that. Loki set his head on Tony’s pillow, eyes falling shut. Tony turned his head to the side, not bothering to hide the smile on his face as he stared at Loki.

He grabbed Loki’s hand, drawing it up to his chest. As Loki’s eyes drew open, curious, Tony shut his own. Loki squeezed his hand back. Tony didn’t know how long they laid there. Tony would’ve been content to stay in bed all day, but after a while Loki coaxed him out with promises of breakfast.

After eating Tony was groggy again. He sat hunched over his first cup of coffee, absently thinking

up designs for a friend for Dum-E. Loki's chair squeaked as he got up from the table. His robe was crooked on his shoulders, displaying enough collarbone to draw Tony's lustful attention. "I'm going to take a shower," Loki said, pausing beside Tony's chair. He bent down and kissed the top of Tony's forehead. "Try not to set my kitchen on fire."

"You say that like I've done it before," Tony complained.

"Really, I'm just asking that you leave all of my appliances in one piece," Loki smirked, walking from the room. Tony rolled his eyes. After a while he got up and got another cup of coffee. He started to really wake up, enough that he felt bored. Loki was taking too long in the shower.

Tony wandered out into Loki's living room and plopped down on his couch. The satin robe Loki had given him was too long, and Tony felt kinda ridiculous in it. He reached for the remote, brushing a hand along his stubble. Yawning, Tony settled on a show about fixing up old cars.

When he heard Loki's footsteps pad into the room, he looked back over his shoulder and was surprised to see that not only was Loki still wearing a robe, but his hair was wet. For a moment, Tony was stunned by the soft waves against the sharp angles of Loki's cheekbones. Loki approached the couch, setting his hands along the back of it as Tony stared up at him with awestruck eyes. "Why haven't you let me see you with curls before? Whenever you wear your hair down, it's straight."

A flicker of surprise crossed Loki's face. "It does not lend itself as easily to the professionalism I try to cultivate for work," he said, brushing a wet lock back behind his ear. The ends had begun to dry, frizzing slightly as they took on waves and spirals. "I suppose I am in the habit of always having it that way," he finished, smiling as though he'd answered a question that he hoped to move on from but took no offense to.

"Could it maybe be a weekend thing?" Tony asked, hopeful. "Because I love it. I want to see how it looks when it's dry."

Loki's gaze dropped to the couch, a flattered smile on his lips that he hurried to speak over. "It won't look like you think it will. It has a mind of its own, and I was rather hoping we could do something else this morning."

Tony wanted to chase the first part of what he'd said, but he was also intrigued by the second half, so naturally that won. "And that is?"

Loki's expressive green eyes set on his with a hint of quiet determination. "I would like to try again with you on top. Taking me."

The words sent a rush of blood to Tony's groin, he couldn't deny it. But even as a swell of excitement crescendoed forward, Tony took a sobering breath in. "You're sure?"

"Yes," Loki said.

There was no room for doubt in his expression, so Tony didn't push the issue. Instead, he pushed aside the hesitancy from last time and let an indulgent grin slide across his face. "Then let's go for it."

Loki drew his hands away from the back of the couch, standing a little taller as he turned around to start for the bedroom. Tony forgot about the TV rambling on behind him. He picked up his feet to catch Loki, hurriedly combing his hair to look a little better and stealing a glance of himself in the reflective surface of the coffee table. Tony quickly straightened out the robe.

As they walked into the bedroom, Tony's attention darted to the nightstand. It was still a mess from earlier, with the lube bottle sitting up with the top cap flipped open. It hadn't been carefully arranged and planned out. Relief swept through Tony. Tony knelt on the mattress between the rumpled sheets, grabbing a pillow. "Lay here," he said, patting the spot beside him.

Loki hesitated for a moment, toying with the belt on his robe before tugging it loose and tossing the whole thing aside. Tony openly stared at the expanse of pale skin. Loki laid down beside him, lifting his hips when prompted so that Tony could slide the pillow beneath. Tony traced his hand down Loki's thigh. Loki's eyes darted to him. "You can't just want me to lay here?"

"Lo," Tony said, setting one hand on his shoulder. "Let me work you open, okay? I want to." Loki's lips fell into the slightest frown, a few worry lines appearing on his forehead. "Trust me on this. You're kind of a control freak sometimes, alright? Let me be the control freak this time." He grinned in reassurance and was relieved when Loki relaxed, the lines vanishing.

"If you insist," Loki said with a sigh, smiling then at Tony.

Tony reached for the bottle of lube. His heart began to pound as he drew Loki's legs apart, settling between them. Tony drew Loki's cock between slicked fingers, slipping down to his balls to the sensitive spot that always drew a keen. Tony set one hand on Loki's knee, content to watch him react. Loki's eyes drifted towards the ceiling. His lips were slightly parted, his expression a bit pensive. "I can't talk you out of going to work tomorrow, can I?" Tony asked.

Loki's eyes set on him. "Why?" He raised an eyebrow. "You're not skipping your work, are you?"

"Nah," Tony said, slipping his finger to trace around his rim. "Unless you are?"

An honest grin quirked up on Loki's lips. He turned his head to the side, thinking. "And what would we be doing on this day off?"

Tony's finger sunk in past the first knuckle. It wasn't as tight as he was expecting, but it wouldn't take more yet either. "I don't know," Tony said. "Maybe we could try out the lingerie you bought me?"

"You know that's supposed to be a surprise," Loki reminded him. Tony knew there was no way that Loki'd actually skip work. Not for just a simple day off, at least.

"I am planning to send you pictures of it," Tony said. "Although I think you have the flash drive right now."

"I'm adding something to it," Loki said. "But it's not done yet. Maybe I'll save it on my computer to finish so I can give the flash drive back to you today. I can add it later." Tony was searching for his prostrate, but he hadn't seemed to find it yet. Loki was relaxing though as he talked, so Tony took that as a positive.

"Can't I read it half-finished?" Tony asked.

"No," Loki said, scowling. His eyes fluttered shut for a moment. Tony returned to the spot, and a slight groan fell from Loki's mouth. "I haven't even had time to edit," Loki mumbled, clutching the sheets beside his head. He parted his legs invitingly, stretching his neck as his head writhed to the side.

Tony wanted him now. Bad. His own cock had been peeking out from under the robe for a while now. Tony shrugged the robe off, letting it crumple on the bed beneath him. Tony grasped himself, his calloused fingers barely providing any relief. "You didn't tell me what you'd hoped it'd be

about,” Loki said.

Tony released himself, taking a steady breath. Loki’s own cock was hard and weeping against his abdomen. Tony worked his fingers impatiently. Loki’s heat radiating into his fingers was too damn inviting and distracting. “Surprise me,” Tony said. “That’s what I told you.”

“You did,” Loki echoed, distracted too. Tony searched for that spot inside him, finding it faster this time. Loki moaned, stretching his legs in frustration. Tony realized that Loki had been holding still, laying there like Tony’d asked him to.

“You can move,” Tony said.

“I intend to,” Loki said instantly. “As soon as you…” His eyes fell shut for a moment, the thought lost.

Tony smiled, breathing out in a huff. He wanted to be inside him now. Fuck, did he want to. But he also didn’t want to half-ass the prep, especially after last time. “Getting there,” Tony said. Tony stroked Loki’s cock as he stretched him open. He reached for the lube again. Loki combed his fingers through Tony’s hair while his head was bent downward.

“You’re more careful with me than yourself,” Loki said, voice soft and low.

Tony used his free hand to trace Loki’s hipbone with his thumb. “I can say the exact same thing about you.”

Loki smirked, turning his head to the side and staring at the wall. His cheeks were flushed dark pink. Tony wanted to kiss him again. “You deserve the attention,” Loki half-mumbled. Tony smiled, looking away. Loki had a sentimental side a mile wide, not that he’d admit it.

“You do too,” Tony said, giving his ass a playful, feather light smack that had Loki grinning.

Loki closed his eyes, his shoulders slumping against the bed as his legs fell slightly more open. “I think I’m as ready as I’m going to be, Tony.”

For the first time, Tony felt nervous. He hoped Loki would like it. He really hoped Loki would like it.

He reminded himself that he knew what he was doing. He was *good* at this.

Tony leaned forward, placing a kiss to Loki’s bent knee.

Loki must’ve seen the question in Tony’s gaze. “I know I want you this morning, Tony,” he said, voice soft. “When I woke up, I—you laying there, Tony, you’re—” Loki smiled, licking his lips. Tony’d never seen him struggle to find his words so much. “I’ve always thought you look particularly charming in the morning with the shadow along your beard and your hair like that,” he said, mumbling the last bit.

“With my hair like what?” Tony asked, practically purred, eyes dancing with delighted pride. Loki flicked his fingers in a vague upwards gesture. “If I’d known you liked it so much, I never would bother to brush it.” Loki smiled at that.

It was a slow, soft smile that Loki held as his gaze settled on Tony, patient and relaxed. Tony knew the moment had finally come. It felt surreal. It was also mixed with apprehension from last time. “Tell me if it hurts,” Tony said. He still wasn’t entirely sure that he trusted Loki to.

“I will,” Loki said. There was a bit of sass in it, and Tony had no doubts that Loki would argue with him if Tony questioned him. He held in a sigh. He hoped that something had clicked from their talk.

Tony guided himself in, slowly, biting the inside of his cheek. It was unbearably good. The tight heat drew Tony inward, and he grasped Loki’s thighs in an effort not to simply thrust in completely with one motion like he wanted to. Suddenly warm fingers were closing in over his hands. “Softer there,” Loki muttered.

Tony released the tension in his hands. He couldn’t bear to look at Loki’s face the closer he got. It was getting intense again. It was so simple, but it was with *Loki*. If Tony started to think about what that meant to him, he’d be hopelessly overwhelmed. When he bottomed out, Tony made the slightest movement before Loki said, “Stay still for a moment.” Tony blinked, eyes darting to Loki’s face on instinct.

His head was turned to the side, soft curls tangled around his neck and across the pillow. He had one hand beside his mouth as if he was about to press his fingers to his lips, while the other was sprawled out on the bed and absently clutching the sheet. He didn’t look pained, he looked... wrecked. Tony’d never had Loki beneath him like this.

And he was utterly gorgeous.

Tony’s chest ached. Fuck, he loved Loki. How had he ever thought he should avoid acting on his initial crush? He couldn’t even imagine his life anymore without Loki in it.

Tony pressed his lips together to contain himself. Loki reached for his hand, then encouraged Tony to move.

Agonizingly slow, Tony started a rhythm, Loki’s arms coming around him as Tony sunk down to mouth at Loki’s neck, overwhelmed. The tight heat, Loki’s body yielding to him, the soft moans: they were overwhelming.

Tony drew his fingers through Loki’s hair, still wet at the roots, as Loki’s lips pressed to his. Loki’s tongue swept along bottom lip, Loki’s arm drawing around him possessively. Tony found comfort in the kiss. It was powerful, that comfort. Tony lingered in it.

Blunt nails drew down his back, hips undulating against his. Loki breathed out a needy whine against Tony’s ear.

Loki’s leg wrapped around him, demanding. Frustrated. Tony snapped his hips forward and got a groan in response, fingers raking through his hair as fervent lips became adamant.

Tony let go. He thrust into the agonizingly tight heat, Loki’s moaning obscene. Loki writhed against him for friction.

For a moment, Tony glanced at Loki, and found him panting on the pillow, swollen lips parted, eyes squeezed shut in frantic desire, his hips demanding Tony’s attention. Tony came at the sight, mouth falling open in ecstasy.

Tony was trying to catch his breath when he realized that Loki was wedging his hand between them to reach for himself. Dazed, Tony grabbed it away, moving back so that he could take Loki in his mouth without a second thought. Loki came almost instantly, fingers clenched in Tony’s hair.

Tony leaned up, panting as he let his head rest against Loki’s thigh. Loki didn’t move a muscle when Tony disposed of the condom, or when Tony crawled back over him, his breath drifting

against Loki's skin. Tony tucked his nose into the crook of Loki's neck, letting him catch his breath. He held Loki's shoulder, almost possessively.

"So?" Tony asked, lifting his head.

Loki's disoriented eyes found their way to Tony. He stared for a moment. "I know why you get that look on your face now." An amused little smirk lit up Loki's face, but his eyes were tender and bright.

Tony didn't ask what look. He just hid his own smile against Loki's chest.

"I don't plan on getting out of this bed anytime soon," Loki added, throwing an arm around Tony's back. Tony pressed a few kisses to Loki's warm skin, the tang of salt greeting him.

"Sounds alright to me," Tony answered. He'd been laying on Loki's chest, basking in the heady rush of endorphins for a while when he heard a snore and glanced up to find that Loki had passed out. Tony just grinned, feeling every bit the lovesick sap that he was turning out to be.

Chapter 45

Tony was in the middle of teasing Happy when he felt his phone vibrate. Tony didn't have to check to see who it was. Instead, he pressed his phone to one ear as he set his hand over the other to block out the sounds of the basketball game they were at. "Hey, Lo. Are you on your way home?"

"I'm leaving the office now. Is there anything you'd like me to pick up?" Loki's voice was cut off by a loud cooing sound to Tony's right.

"Ooooooh," Happy started teasing, only for Rhodey to pipe up and start making high pitched cooing sounds while making a kissy face.

"Shut up!" Tony exclaimed, swatting at Happy. The man's laughter was only broken up by his attempts at cooing.

"Do I need to come down there and defend your honor?" Loki asked, a spark of amusement in his tone.

"No," Tony said, cradling his hand against his phone as Rhodey started up again. "I'll text you when I'm on my way over. We're in the third quarter." Tony nudged Happy with his foot, glaring at him.

"Alright. Have fun," Loki said, holding back a laugh as Happy said his name in a loving voice. He hung up. Tony tucked his phone in his pocket.

"Now you owe me nachos," he told Happy. "And a soda," he added to Rhodey.

"Fine, fine," Rhodey said, standing up. "I'm going to think of it as payment for not having to watch you two get all lovey-dovey on the kiss cam."

Tony scowled, and before he could even start a rebuttal Happy added, "You know you two would if he could've made it, Tones. You get heart eyes every time you're on the phone with him."

Instead of trying to deny it, Tony said, "Nachos. Soda. Now."

Sometimes Rhodey and Happy's teasing made him feel like Loki and him would've been obvious in their feelings when they'd been working together, even though Tony'd been certain that wasn't the case. He supposed it was a very good thing that he'd worked alone in the IT basement.

When Tony called for Loki to let him into the building, Loki still seemed to hold the amusement from earlier in his voice. Tony was in a great mood as he rode the elevator up. It was always fun to hang out with Happy and Rhodey. As much as they gave each other a hard time, they were good to each other too. Tony scratched at the top button on his collared shirt as he waited for Loki to answer the door. When he did, Tony immediately noticed the smell of something sweet cooking.

"I made cookies," Loki said, noticing Tony's attention turn towards the kitchen. "From one of those pre-made packages at the store. They came out of the oven a little while ago."

"Is this because I gave you a hard time about not having them last time?" Tony asked, already starting to walk in that direction.

“No,” Loki answered, gently closing the door, but it felt like a yes. He followed Tony into the kitchen and handed him a plate from the cabinet. “Help yourself.”

“Chocolate. Perfect,” Tony said, already taking a bite.

Loki sat down at the table with him, sipping from his mug. Tony wasn’t entirely surprised when he saw that it was hot chocolate. “I have something for you,” Loki said, reaching into his vest pocket. “I figured this would be easier than making you wait for me to let you into the building every time,” Loki said. He set a key card on the table. “It’s yours to keep.”

Tony stared at the key, suddenly aware of the crumbs on his face. He hurried to swallow. “Lo,” he said, voice breaking as he realized his throat was dry. He cleared it and tried again. “Thanks, I—” He looked up to find Loki watching him with contentment, like a cat in a sun patch.

“I should’ve had it made sooner,” Loki said. “It just took me a while to get around to it.” He straightened his vest, about to move on like Tony’s big brown eyes weren’t soft and bright as they focused on him. “How was the game?”

“I’ll get you one to my place,” Tony said. “But let me know if you’re headed over or whatever so you don’t walk in on Dum-E making a mess.”

Loki broke into a smile that was far too big to just be for Tony’s joke. “Does he do that often?”

“More than you’d think.” Tony reached for another cookie.

Loki sipped his hot chocolate, and from the corner of his eye, Tony thought he saw Loki hiding a pleased smirk. Tony carefully set the key card into his pocket with his phone. He was hyper aware of its place in his pocket now. He glanced back at Loki, not realizing that he was starting to smirk himself until he saw Loki mirror it.

“I think we should get you out of your work clothes,” Tony said. A cunning look crossed Loki’s face. The game was on.

“Why? Is there something wrong with them?” He asked loftily, drawing his tie through his fingers knowingly. Tony never should’ve let him know about that particular kink.

Tony put on his most charming smile, shoving away thoughts of the fun they could have with the tie. “It’s indecent,” Tony said. “You should be dressed for bed at this hour.”

“And what about yourself?”

“I prefer to sleep nude.”

Loki snorted out a laugh, failing to suppress it. “Then perhaps we should both get ready for bed.”

“We should,” Tony said, standing up. “It’s only reasonable.”

“We wouldn’t want to be unreasonable,” Loki agreed, following Tony’s lead towards the bedroom. Tony peeled off his shirt and tossed it over the couch as they passed it, enjoying the sharp intake of breath from behind him.

Tony looked back over his shoulder to soak in the effect. Loki’s eyes were glued to the criss crossing green straps that ran across his back before sinfully sinking down below the waistband of his jeans. The top was attached to a lace collar around his neck. It’d been somewhat itchy to wear, but that was worth it to see the way Loki gawked.

Tony turned back around like he hadn't noticed at all. He made it another two steps before he felt hands close around his waist and suddenly Loki was pulling him in against his chest. He set his nose against Tony's neck, breathing in before his warm breath fell against Tony's ear. "It seems that you had a surprise for me as well."

"I ran home after the game and changed," Tony said. He rocked his hips back against Loki, grinning as he was hugged tightly in return. "Would you like to undress me?"

"Very much."

"Then you're going to have to work for it," Tony announced, not missing the way Loki stilled for a moment.

"Work for it," Loki repeated slowly. "And how am I to do that?"

"Hmm," Tony said, dropping his weight back against Loki a little more. "First you're going to have to be good and let me undress you. Then, we'll see."

Loki huffed. "Those are terrible terms, Tony. I'd be a fool to accept them." Right. Genius businessman and all that.

"But maybe for me?" Tony asked. If Loki had been facing him, Tony would've batted his eyelashes.

Instead of reprimanding him for being a brat, Loki sighed. "I will let you undress me," he said. "And then we'll see."

"I thought those were bad terms."

"Would you like to negotiate line by line?"

Tony held back an eye roll. "Let me undress you already," he said. As Loki let go, Tony grabbed his hand, drawing him into the bedroom. It was daring, but Tony only considered it for a moment before deciding to do it. He pushed Loki onto the bed, maneuvering him so that he could use Loki being caught off guard to crawl into his lap. For a moment Loki was surprised, but then a sly smile twitched up on his lips at Tony's trick. "You are going to be very good," Tony told him. "And keep your hands behind your back unless I am moving them."

Loki wrapped one leg around Tony and raised an eyebrow. "And your legs," Tony amended.

"How can I keep my legs behind my back—"

"Don't be a smartass," Tony said, grabbing his tie. Loki grinned, the spark in his eyes egging Tony on, but his leg fell to the floor. "Good. Now then. I think I'll leave this on for now in case I need to use it again," Tony said, tugging at his tie. Loki's breath stuttered out. It was subtle, just a soft inhalation that faltered at Tony's words, but Tony noticed. "I think the pants will go first," Tony said, watching how Loki's pupils practically dilated as he said it.

Tony actually took care to set Loki's dress slacks over the back of his chair to try and prevent them from wrinkling too badly. He was less careful with Loki's briefs, and felt pretty damn smug when he saw the effect this'd already had on Loki. His cock stood at attention, hard and flushed between his bare thighs.

Loki sat with his shoulders back, the slightest bit of challenge in his posture.

Tony stood beside the bed and ran his hands up Loki's thighs, smiling at him. "You're being so good for me."

"You say that as though you want me to be difficult," Loki said.

Tony stood up, deliberately playing with his belt loops to hint at the rest of the lingerie set. "Nah," Tony said. He knew Loki just wanted to see Tony undress, and he'd play along until he couldn't be patient. Tony bent down for a kiss, loving the way Loki's mouth chased after his as he pulled away. "Uh-uh," Tony said, taking a step back. "Stay there."

Loki frowned, but his cheeks were flushed. Tony took a moment to memorize the sight before deciding that Loki's tied back hair was out of place. He freed it, stealing the elastic band by securing it around his wrist. Loki smiled knowingly, used to that particular trick from Tony.

Tony loved the way Loki's hair fell down to his shoulders, the black locks dented by the mark where the elastic had held them up. Tony'd always figured that Loki had a bad case of bedhead when it started to go extra wavy, but now that he knew how curly it could be, he wanted to see that again. Tony let out a wistful sigh, ignoring Loki's questioning look at that and reaching for his vest instead.

Tony also carefully set that with Loki's dress slacks. Tony started to go for Loki's tie when Loki stole a kiss instead, tongue boldly drawing across Tony's bottom lip as Tony breathed out, floored. "Lo," he said, blinking. "That was—" Tony started to smile.

Technically Loki had just broken the rules by partially lifting himself up from the bed, but judging by the proud look on Loki's face and the impressed one on Tony's, it didn't matter.

Tony grinned, glancing away. Loki didn't do it again when Tony returned to his tie. Tony quickly undid the knot and slipped the tie into his back pocket.

"You're not keeping that," Loki warned him.

Tony set one hand on his chest. "Me? Keeping one of your ties? I would never."

"You already have two."

It was three, but Tony wasn't going to correct him.

"They're just at my place in case you need them getting dressed one day," Tony said. Loki shook his head. Tony started to unbutton his shirt, but when he was about halfway down, Tony stopped. He grabbed Loki's arm to bring it free of the sleeve.

"This is not how you undo a shirt, Tony," Loki said dryly. "Typically one undoes all of the buttons first."

"Typically," Tony said. "But then you'd be undressed, wouldn't you, and I can't have that."

Tony wanted to laugh at the look Loki gave him. Tony knew how to play games too. Loki was glaring at him in suspicion as Tony drew his arms free but left the shirt around his waist, holding on by a couple of buttons.

Tony crawled onto the bed behind him, drawing the tie from his pocket. He curled it around Loki's wrists so he'd feel what it was before speaking. "Is it alright if I use your tie for this?"

Loki glanced back over his shoulder to take another look at the tie. "Yes, but not that one," he said.

“There’s a black one hanging up in my closet.”

Tony went to his closet and hung the expensive one in his hand up on the rack. “Lo. There are like fifty black ties in here.”

“Don’t be so dramatic,” Loki said. Tony realized Loki’s voice was moving towards him just before he appeared in the doorway. Tony would’ve complained about him leaving the bed, but he was temporarily speechless as he saw the way Loki’s white dress shirt clung to his narrow hips, the sleeves flaring out behind him as he walked.

“This one,” Loki said, picking a tie that looked just like the rest. “I don’t care if this one gets damaged.”

“I’m not planning to damage it,” Tony said, accepting the tie as it was handed to him. Loki hummed like that didn’t really matter. Tony found himself staring at Loki’s cock and the white dress shirt. He didn’t even realize he was doing it until he looked up and found Loki smirking.

“So,” Loki said. “Since I’ve clearly worked for it, can I undress you now?”

It was wrong for him to be so damn smug and for that to only make him that much hotter.

“Turn around,” Tony said, flustered. He had to go around Loki to grab his wrists. Loki was laughing as Tony tied them. “You’re still dressed, you know.”

“Barely,” Loki said.

Tony pushed at his back, trying to fight off a smile on principle as he marched Loki back over to the bed. Loki sat down with graceful ease, completely confident as he waited on Tony.

“Keep that on and I’ll take my jeans off,” Tony said.

“I don’t see how I’m going to take it off,” Loki quipped. Tony gave him a flat stare in reply.

Tony took a few steps back from the bed before making a show out of undressing. He left the green lingerie in place, flaunting the crotchless lace bottoms with a tilt of his hips. When Loki looked at him with a hunger, Tony only wanted to showoff more. “Come here,” Loki said, throat dry.

Tony stalked towards him. The moment he was in Loki’s lap, Loki’s legs wrapped around him and pulled Tony flat against the bed with him, mouth ravenous. Tony groaned into the kiss, writhing against Loki and losing his entire train of thought as Loki eagerly kissed him. Tony lost track of time until his cock started throbbing, bordering on painful with the teasing friction. Tony gasped for breath as he sat up, pinning Loki’s shoulders against the mattress.

He stared down at Loki. He knew what he wanted. Tony drew back down, Loki’s lips parting for another kiss when Tony paused, looking into hazy green eyes.

“I want to be inside you, babe.”

Loki’s eyes disappeared behind a slow, languid blink. “Okay.” Joy sung through Tony as he yanked the nightstand drawer open. He traced Loki’s rim only to find that his finger easily sunk inside. Tony easily added another in surprise before glancing at Loki.

“It was going to be a while before you were back from the game, and I’d been reading…”

“Reading what?” Tony asked coyly, scissoring his fingers and stretching him for good measure.

Loki let his eyes fall shut. “You know what,” he breathed out. “Not things I’d written, but—” He gasped in, rocking his hips towards Tony’s fingers. “—similar to what I write.”

“Fuck that’s hot,” Tony whispered. He loved the mental image of Loki working himself up and getting himself off. He knew Loki had sex toys he hadn’t seen and made a mental note to ask later.

Instead, Tony sank into the searing, blissful heat of him. Tony slowly withdrew before pushing back in, even though his body was screaming to let loose. He was desperate for it. Then Tony heard a mumble. He paused, concerned by default, only for Loki to repeat himself with blazing red cheeks. “Harder.”

Tony froze. “Didn’t you tell me last time—” He began to gloat, eyes dancing.

“Yes, now do it,” Loki complained, urging Tony on with his leg.

Tony still watched his pace, or thought he did, but between their groaning and urgency he was as lost in the moment as Loki.

Tony grasped the shirt around Loki’s waist, clenching the taut fabric in one hand as he slammed inside. A button slipped loose and Tony adjusted his grip so that he was holding both sides of the shirt as he pounded into him. Loki’s moaning grew louder with each thrust until he was crying Tony’s name, unable to articulate more than need.

Loki clenched tightly around him and sent Tony over the edge. The sensation shot down his spine and curled his toes. Tony was panting when he opened his eyes and saw that Loki had come over his chest and the white shirt, his hand clasped around his cock, the tie peeking out from the mattress beneath him like a ribbon untied from a gift.

Loki cracked one eye open. “It slipped loose almost the moment after you put it on,” he explained. He was amused, too. Tony was just stunned at how much Loki liked playing along.

Then he noticed the shirt. It seemed fine, but... “Did I ruin your shirt?”

Loki broke into a smile. “No.” He was still slightly breathless. “This is the best thing that’s happened to this shirt.”

Tony smiled, leaning down for a kiss. Loki grasped the back of his neck. “I’m going to have to see you walk around in this some more,” he said, drawing his thumb along the collar and sliding it beneath. Tony shivered. Loki kissed him then, and Tony’s mind was only filled with promises to do just that.

Chapter 46

Tony was sprawled out on his bed, one leg under his dark blue comforter while the other set over Loki's. Loki was laying on his stomach, his hands folded beneath his chin as he watched Tony with a lazy expression in his eyes. The slatted light cast in the dim room from the street lamps settled along Loki's back, curving with his sharp shoulder blades. Tony couldn't get it up again if he tried, but that didn't stop him from acknowledging how gorgeous the man beside him was.

Tony wasn't sure why neither of them had drifted off yet. He blinked, fighting off a yawn. He didn't actually want to sleep.

"I have half of the mind to get up and make coffee, but I can't seem to drag myself out of bed," Loki muttered. "Do you feel tired?"

Tony folded his hands over his stomach, shaking his head as he stared up at the ceiling. "I don't think I want to throw coffee into the equation, though."

Loki hummed. A dog barked out on the street, the sound growing distant. "I'm not tired either," he said, though it sounded like a lie. He tilted his head down and pressed his forehead against his hands. He took a deep breath as he brought his head up again, setting his chin back on his hands. "Last week at work, Thor asked me what'd happened. He had this smug smile all day. It was absolutely infuriating." Loki stretched his legs. "I told him nothing, but he said I looked—happier."

"Is that a bad thing?" Tony honestly couldn't see where the problem was coming from, or why it annoyed Loki to be told he looked happy.

"No," Loki said. He laid his head down on his hands, towards Tony. "I just hate that he acts like he knows something."

Tony sighed. He'd pretty much given up on trying to understand sibling dynamics. "Rhodey and Happy give me shit all the time." Tony shrugged. "I just give it back to them."

"He's arrogant about it though." Loki frowned, staring at the rumpled sheets beside him. "Do you remember the woman I told you about at the gym that I thought he was seeing?"

"Yeah, Val something?"

"It turns out that Valkyrie is the name of her sports team." Loki propped his head up on his hand, elbow pointed out on his pillow. "I went with him to his gym after work, and I wasn't shy about asking her questions. Her name is Brunnhilde and she's been happily married to her wife for three years. She showed us pictures. Her wife is a tall, gorgeous blonde that's on Brunnhilde's sports team. She's starting her own business soon. Some sort of organics thing. They're a very cute couple." Loki set his hand against his cheek. "Thor's crushed," Loki said with way too much sympathy for someone who hated their brother.

"Maybe they can hook him up with someone else on their team," Tony said.

"That's a good idea." Loki seemed to really be considering it. Tony reached between them, setting his hand on Loki's hip.

Tony brushed his thumb along the soft, pale skin. "Then you can tease him for being happy," Tony said. He let go and drummed his fingers against the sheets.

“It’s not that he’s teasing me for being happy,” Loki said, almost mumbling. He rolled onto his side. “It’s more—after years of my being single and his insinuating that I should see someone or attempting to set me up and my refusing, it is sort of like an I-told-you-so situation.”

Tony thought about it for a moment. “But Thor knows you’re wired differently, right?”

“Somewhat,” Loki said, a bit begrudgingly. It was hard to imagine him outright explaining it to Thor, but Tony didn’t know a hundred percent what they did and didn’t share with each other either. It was a hard read sometimes. Most of the time. He knew that Loki had told Thor about them when it was still a secret, but he also knew that the two brothers could fight like cats and dogs.

“Well he’s happy for you. That’s what matters,” Tony said. Loki let out a soft sigh. “Although,” Tony said, starting to tease, “now that you’ve had a taste of this, maybe I should start looking over my shoulder. There’re a lot of attractive guys out there, even if none of them have an ass as nice as mine—”

“—Stop it,” Loki said, fighting off a laugh as he nudged his leg against Tony’s. “I’m not going to become some sort of sex fiend just because I enjoy it with you.”

“No?” Tony made a skeptical sound, pursing his lips. Loki rolled his eyes, smiling.

Loki’s hair fell against his face as he stared at the mattress. “I think it would take me a while to get to this point with someone else anyway,” Loki said. “I enjoy the physical sensation, but it’s the closeness to you that I really like—”

Tony rolled into him, wrapping his arms around Loki as he pressed their foreheads together. “Why are you so stinking cute, huh?” He grumbled.

“I’m not,” Loki breathed out, flustered by the sudden affection.

“You are,” Tony insisted. He wrapped his leg around Loki too. Loki’s hands were wedged between their chests.

“It’s more like you said before, where some people like it for the closeness and not the act as much,” Loki said, patiently trying to explain it for Tony. “I enjoy some physical things with myself too, but it’s not the same as—”

“—I know where you’re coming from, Lo,” Tony reassured him. He didn’t feel like he needed it explained to him anymore. He hadn’t felt insecure about it in what felt like ages. “You’re still cute.” Loki made a very put upon sigh. “And it’s good to know I’m slightly better than an orgasm you can give yourself.” Tony was going for teasing, but it accidentally came off as a little sore.

“Tony,” Loki practically cooed. He freed one arm to wrap it around Tony. “You are much more than that.” He brushed their lips together, trying to find a feasible angle with the way they’d intertwined themselves. “I love you,” he breathed, dragging his tongue along Tony’s lip. Tony’s heart fluttered out of rhythm. “And I love being able to explore these things with you,” he said, voicing dropping down low. He pinched Tony’s ass, drawing a surprised yelp.

Tony blushed, even as his mouth dropped open in awe. “You do love games,” Tony recovered.

“Mmm, and I have yet to see you in everything I bought.” Tony shivered at the memory of Loki’s thumb toying with the lace collar on the last set. Loki let his forehead rest against Tony’s again, drawing his fingers through the wavy brown locks at the base of Tony’s skull.

Tony sank into the sensation of it for a moment before he remembered with a start, “You said something about toys and trying them on yourself last time and I forgot to ask. Where are they?”

Loki was quiet for a moment. “Under my bed,” he said with a hint of suspicion.

“And what are they?” Tony asked, voice rising with intrigue.

Loki’s hand stilled. “You can see them when I show you.”

“Ooh, it’s so good you don’t want to say it out loud. What is it? I bet you’ve got like a huge trunk with secret interlocking drawers in it and—”

“—It’s just a couple of dildos, don’t get so excited,” Loki admonished him. He started to pull away but Tony latched onto him like a barnacle. Loki sighed dramatically.

“You’re just saying that,” Tony said. “I read your stories. Hey, we should go visit a sex shop sometime—”

“—Yes, that is exactly how I want to spend an afternoon,” Loki drawled. Tony pouted. “Don’t talk me into it, Tony. I know too many people. I don’t want to run into—”

“—So what. Then they’re there too and you can keep each other’s secret. Don’t you want to watch me walk through an aisle of dildos?”

Loki was quiet for a split second before bursting into laughter. “Tony,” he gasped. “You’re ridiculous.”

“I know.” Tony smiled then, feeling entirely at ease and more than a little sleepy. Loki returned his smile with warmth and affection. “Hey uh, there was something I was going to ask you earlier,” Tony said. “But the delivery guy came just as I was going to ask and I got distracted. My butler from when I was growing up is going to be in town in a couple weeks and he asked if I wanted to meet up for lunch or something. He uh, he’s known me since I was born and sends me cards on my birthday and holidays and things like that. I want you to meet him.”

Loki searched his eyes for a moment, but it was hard to tell what he was thinking. “Tony, I’d love to.”

Tony smiled, nodding his head. The pillow they shared shifted with the movement.

“Does your father know he’s visiting?” Loki asked. It was spoken casually, but Tony could tell he was being careful.

“No,” Tony said. “Probably not. Jarvis has always looked out for me when my dad didn’t.” He felt Loki relax against him. “He’d come to see my school performances, help me with my homework, give me advice, stuff like that. He even called me when I left home to make sure I was okay and checked in. I know it’s uncomfortable for him, with the way things are between my parents and me, and I know my dad’s his boss.”

“It sounds like he cares about you a lot,” Loki said.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “I think he does.” Tony’d been brought up to know that there was a line there, that Jarvis worked for his parents and wasn’t really family. But he felt like family. Tony really wanted Loki to meet him. “And I always know Jarvis meant to contact me, unlike my dad’s secretary with that stupid award thing.”

“Your dad’s loss,” Loki said. “You wouldn’t have enjoyed being there anyway,” he consoled. “I can’t wait to meet Jarvis. What is he like?”

“Well, he’s kind of sarcastic,” Tony said, his lips quirking up. “He has a good sense of humor. And he tells it like it is, too.”

Loki broke into a smile. “So that’s where you get it from.”

“What? Telling it like it is?” Tony raised his eyebrows at Loki, daring him to go on, but Loki didn’t. “I’m tactful,” Tony said.

“I know,” Loki relented, his fingers combing Tony’s hair again. Tony yawned. Loki caught it from him, drawing a deep breath in. “You can be tactful in the morning telling me off for using all of your creamer.”

“That was a limited edition flavor and your cup was half cream,” Tony said. “Your diet is all sweets—”

“I know, I know,” Loki said, breaking into a yawn.

“Fine. Good night,” Tony said. He paused for a moment. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

They were quiet for a moment.

“This is why everyone makes fun of us,” Tony mumbled.

Loki made a scoffing sound with his mouth, pulling Tony in tighter. “We’ll just have to start making out in front of them.”

“I’m up for that,” Tony said.

“You would be,” Loki said. “Good night, Tony.”

“Yeah,” Tony mumbled, breaking into another yawn. He didn’t remember if Loki said something clever back or not. All he knew was he woke up in the middle of the night with a hand in his face and rearranged them so that his back was to Loki’s chest and drifted right back to sleep.

Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony was slightly nervous for Loki to meet Jarvis, although more than anything, he was excited to see Jarvis again. But it wasn't until Tony saw Jarvis walking towards the table that he realized just how much he'd missed the man. Tony was standing up without thinking about it, walking over to draw Jarvis into a hug.

Jarvis's returning hug was firm and reassuring, not cloying or doting but absolutely solid the way it'd been throughout all of Tony's life. He was frailer now though, and Tony felt the press of ribs. He didn't dwell on it. The bright, almost snarky look in Jarvis's eyes put aside any worry Tony might've had.

When Tony moved to let Jarvis sit down, he saw that Loki had been standing too. "Uh, Jarvis, this is Loki, my boyfriend," Tony said, swelling with pride as he felt the words leave his lips.

"Tony said he'd be introducing you today," Jarvis said. "It's nice to meet you." He extended his hand, Loki already moving to meet him in the middle. As they shook, Loki and Jarvis held eye contact, hands still for a moment before Loki spoke.

"I've been looking forward to meeting you. Tony's only had good things to say about you."

Jarvis glanced at Tony. "Is that so?" He asked, as if it were amusing.

Tony intervened, knowing how Jarvis liked to tease. That could easily become a lead in to a story from any of the times that Tony had moped about Jarvis making him behave in one way or another as a kid. "Let's sit down. The waitress is heading over."

Luckily she was, and as they gave their orders, Tony was surprised to find how happy he felt. He'd really missed Jarvis. "Tony," Jarvis said as the waitress left. "How did you and Loki meet?"

Tony hadn't told Jarvis much in their brief correspondences over holiday cards and the like, other than that he was dating Loki and he was happy in his new home. He hadn't wanted to bog Jarvis down with anything. Especially not in the beginning, when it'd been a lonely move. In return, Jarvis had kept his letters light, though Tony had read the concern between the lines of the first couple.

"We worked together," Tony said. He glanced at Loki to find a soft, reserved smile on his face. "We became friends there, and then when I moved over to the company I'm with now we started dating." It was the story they told everyone, and it felt close enough to the truth at this point. Tony wouldn't have minded sharing with Jarvis the whole truth, but there were other things he wanted to talk about. "Loki used to visit me in IT," Tony said, smiling over at him.

"I was rather hopeless with my computer," Loki said. He was being charming, although he was always charming, but there was the politeness in Loki's voice that Tony was accustomed to hearing when they were in public too.

"What do you do at your company?" Jarvis asked. It was friendly, but Tony caught the briefest flicker of surprise from Loki.

"I am in training to take on the company from my father when he retires," Loki said with polite

humility.

Jarvis turned to Tony with his eyebrows slightly raised, and Tony could practically feel the gears turning in Jarvis's head, sense the snark on the tip of his tongue. There was a reason he fit in so well in the Stark household. However, Tony wanted to make a good impression on Loki and Jarvis both, so he steered the conversation away from teasing and towards something more neutral. "Jarvis, what're you doing in town for the weekend? You said you had something you were going to?"

"My niece is going to school at the college here," Jarvis said. "I'm visiting her and attending her recital."

Loki asked what Jarvis thought of the city, and from there it was a very cordial conversation. Tony was happy to see them getting along well. Too well, he realized. He wasn't sure when the conversation shifted, but at some point Loki stopped acting like he was at a business luncheon with a client he had to impress and Jarvis stopped acting like Loki was a date that Tony was taking to a school dance that he had to evaluate. Tony wished he could figure out when things exactly clicked, but it was too late by the time Loki turned to him with a sly grin.

"I have to admit, I have been dying to hear stories of Tony's childhood." Loki looked utterly pleased with himself, and Tony was getting flashbacks to the time they'd taken Thor out for drinks after his breakup. Tony shouldn't have pried all those stories out of him.

"Have you?" Jarvis asked. "I can't imagine why Tony hasn't told you them all," Jarvis said sarcastically, turning towards Tony. "Did he tell you the story about the time he reprogrammed his father's sprinkler system to spray him as he left in the morning?"

Tony set a hand on his face.

Why did everyone in his life that he loved team up on him? Rhodey and Loki. Rhodey and Happy. Now Loki and Jarvis. It wasn't fair.

"He deserved it," Tony said.

"You were eight and he said you couldn't go to a concert by yourself."

"See? Deserved it," Tony said.

Jarvis patted Tony's shoulder. He had no idea how Loki was reacting because he was too busy giving Jarvis a look. "Would you like to tell Loki about the time you took apart my radio for spare parts?"

"I was building something," Tony said.

"A communicator," Jarvis reminded him fondly. "I shouldn't have gotten you started on Star Trek."

Tony rolled his eyes. "I was just making a better version of a cell phone. It wasn't like I thought I could use it to beam people up." Yet. He'd probably figure that out someday, if he tried.

Loki's quiet laughter caught Tony's attention. "I'm glad you got him started on Star Trek," Loki said, reaching for his glass. "He was able to introduce me. I really enjoy it."

"You're converting other Trekkies now, huh?" Jarvis asked. He was smiling at Tony with a remarkable amount of joy in his eyes. Tony wasn't entirely sure why. Jarvis turned back to Loki.

“We used to watch it on the television together on the weekends. I think we made it through the whole first season in just a couple weekends.”

“Tony and I went on a date to a Star Trek event. We said we’d dress up in character for the next one.” Tony was surprised that Loki was sharing that, but it was clear that Jarvis and Loki liked each other. The flustered feeling in Tony’s chest was batted away for a moment by a sense of peace.

Loki and Jarvis talked about Star Trek some more, and then Jarvis asked Loki about his future plans. Loki talked all about his hopes for Asgard, and Tony desperately tried to ignore thoughts about Thor and crushing Loki’s dream. Jarvis asked lots of questions about Tony’s new life, and Tony was happy to answer all of them and talk about his work at Circuits Maximus. Jarvis said more about his niece and made promises to visit more often. Tony was grateful that Jarvis didn’t say a thing about his dad aside from the sprinkler story.

Faster than Tony realized it, they were getting ready to leave. Loki snatched the check holder before Tony or Jarvis had a chance to. Tony reached for Loki’s wrist as Loki cracked it open. “Babe, I can—” He started, holding Loki’s wrist.

“Absolutely not,” Loki answered. Tony didn’t know how Loki managed to slip his card into the black booklet so quickly. “Jarvis is your guest and I’m honored that you invited me to be a part of your reunion lunch.”

“Lo,” Tony said, voice quieter. “I can. It’s okay.” He didn’t want Loki to feel like he had to pay for everything. Loki shot him a challenging look that had Tony backing off though. He understood. This was important to Loki. Loki wanted to pay for it and dote on him. He let go of Loki’s wrist and looked over only to then see Jarvis watching them, pleased maybe. Tony looked away, although he wasn’t sure why. His cheeks felt warm.

“Thank you,” Jarvis said. “I would start arguing that I should be treating you two, but I have the impression that the matter’s already decided. So. How about next time? Will you promise to let me take you two out then?”

“Yeah,” Tony said, missing how much delighted approval Loki had at Jarvis’s words. It didn’t take long for the waitress to reappear and for Loki to sign off on the bill.

Tony and Loki walked Jarvis out to the parking lot. Jarvis pulled Tony in for a hug goodbye.

He held Tony tightly, and suddenly Tony’s eyes pricked with tears. Jarvis had missed him. A lot. “It is so good to see you smiling again,” Jarvis quietly muttered beside his ear.

Tony blinked. He hadn’t realized him not smiling had been a thing.

“I’ll be back in town for Thanksgiving and the holidays,” Jarvis said as he let go, stepping back. “Loki,” he said, extending his hand. They had a much warmer handshake than before. “It was a pleasure to meet you. Keep an eye on Tony for me, will you?”

“I’m the one that should be keeping an eye on *him*,” Tony said indignantly.

“I’ll endeavor to do my best,” Loki said to Jarvis, glancing over at Tony.

They started another round of goodbyes before Jarvis left for his car. Tony’s chest ached as he watched Jarvis leave.

Tony got in his car, the click of Loki’s seatbelt accompanying him. Tony fumbled with the keys as

he went to start the ignition.

“Jarvis adores you,” Loki said. “Thank you for taking me to meet him.”

Tony’s hand lingered beside the ignition. When Loki made eye contact with him, the contentedness on his face morphed into vague concern. He placed his hand on Tony’s thigh in an unvoiced question.

“Sorry, it’s just, I, seeing Jarvis, I just realized how much has changed.” Tony rubbed at his beard, self-conscious that he hadn’t realized his emotions had been playing out on his face for Loki to see. He hadn’t even realized that he’d been spacing out when they got in the car. He went to back them out of the parking lot so that he could drive them home.

“How so?” Loki asked after thinking about it for a few moments.

“Well,” Tony said, turning out onto the road. “You know. With my dad and the Stark name and everything...” Tony wasn’t sure what he wanted to say, or how to put it into words. He cleared his throat. “Uh, well, I—” Fuck it. It was too hard to try and put into words. He was just going to think out loud. “Do you think Jarvis was right to worry about me?”

“When you moved here?”

“No. At home,” Tony said. “Well, not home-home. Back at my dad’s. Because I always thought he worried about me because that’s just how he was, but now I think, living here, it’s so different—” He sighed. “I wonder if he worried about me back then because of how much it sucked.” Tony grimaced at the road. Maybe he shouldn’t have brought this up. He wasn’t entirely sure why he had and it was uncomfortable. “I mean, I’m so much happier now that it’s easier to see how miserable I was back then.”

They were quiet for a moment.

“Anyway,” Tony said, rushing to fill the silence. “Jarvis looked good. What’d you think of his suit? I definitely think I saw some suit envy there.”

Loki folded his hands in his lap. He spoke in a steady, quiet timbre. “Jarvis has known you since you were born, right? I think he probably saw a very bright boy whose parents weren’t there for him the way they should have been.” The last few words hinted at quiet anger. Tony had no idea what Loki would do if he met Tony’s father, but he was sure it wouldn’t be without conflict. “If anything, Tony,” Loki adjusted his jacket, changing how he was seated. “I think Jarvis is very proud of you. It was very clear that he was proud of you as you talked about your life here.”

Tony’s chest felt lighter at that. “Yeah. Thanks. I don’t know, seeing Jarvis today, it was good to see him,” Tony said emphatically. “Just made me think of things back there. I used to see him everyday, you know? And now I don’t.”

Loki asked his next question very carefully. “Did it make you a little homesick?”

Tony opened his mouth only to close it again. He could see his apartment building in the distance. “No,” Tony decided. “I, honestly, I’m glad Jarvis didn’t bring up my parents all that much. I kind of didn’t want to talk about them, you know? I know I haven’t seen them in forever.” Which, Tony had to admit was weird, but he also didn’t know what to make of that.

“You’ve told me about the night you left, but you never really talk about your parents unless something happens,” Loki said. “Do you want to talk about what it was like, back then?” Loki asked like he already knew the answer.

“No,” Tony said. He knew that’s what Loki was expecting to hear. “Not now. Maybe sometime in the future, but I don’t want to bring all that up right now, you know? It was a really good day.”

Loki nodded. They didn’t talk as Tony parked outside the apartment, but when they walked up to the building, Loki’s hand set reassuringly around his waist as if to guide Tony inside.

“Do you still want to watch a movie?” Tony asked, going to grab the remote once they were inside. Loki was hanging his suit jacket up in the closet. He nodded.

Tony started up the movie they’d agreed on before their lunch with Jarvis. He kicked his feet up onto the coffee table.

When Loki sat down, instead of simply taking a spot near Tony like he usually did, he grabbed Tony by the waist and pulled Tony into his lap. Tony wasn’t sure whether to laugh or feel patronized. “Are we even going to watch the movie?” Tony asked, turning around to plant a teasing kiss on Loki’s lips.

Loki caught the back of his head, tangling his fingers in Tony’s hair and kissing him back with something fierce. At first Tony was surprised, but then he found himself giving it back just as eagerly.

“Only if you want to.”

Tony blinked, cheeks flushed. “After,” Tony said. “After wherever this is going.”

Loki laughed, and as he drew Tony in, Tony couldn’t help but notice that there was something protective and adoring in the way Loki held him. It’d never been something Tony was accustomed to feeling from other people, but he thought he could get used to it with Loki.

Chapter End Notes

Here we are, almost at fifty (!!) chapters, and I'm still curious if there's anything you'd like to see with the boys. :)

Chapter 48

Tony didn't think too much about it the first time that Loki asked. It'd been when Loki was on the phone with him and Tony was sitting in the middle of his living room with a deconstructed TV around him in a million parts. He was currently trying to pry a piece of plastic apart as Loki spoke. "Tony, you—you didn't mind when you met Thor, right?"

Tony had figured that Loki was about to ask him for another night out consoling the guy. "Nope. He's cool," Tony said, absently wondering who Thor had gotten together with and broken up with so fast that Loki hadn't had a chance to tell him as he reached for a screwdriver. "I enjoyed hanging out with him."

"He liked you too," Loki said quickly. "Rhodey's having the barbecue this weekend, right?"

"Yep." Tony was only half-listening as Loki ventured off to talk about something at work.

Tony'd forgotten the question until that weekend, when they were at said barbecue. Loki was tracing the label of his beer bottle as he leaned back in a pink plastic chair, sunglasses pressed to his face. It was blistering hot out but there was a cool breeze. Tony knew he shouldn't be attracted to strands of hair plastered by sweat on Loki's face, but he was. It reminded him of other circumstances when Loki got that look, and Tony needed to stop staring.

Loki mistook Tony's attention for expecting something, because he hurried to fill the silence. "Did you ever talk to my father when you worked for us?"

Tony pouted his lips, thinking. "Nope."

"Hey, Tones," Rhodey called over. "You wanted cheese on your burger, right?"

"What kind of philistine doesn't like cheese on their burger?" Tony called back over. Rhodey laughed. Loki got up to get ice and Tony wandered over to where Happy was starting a card game.

Tony had forgotten about that question too as he sat in a wingback armchair, watching people walk by outside as he sipped his coffee. This was Loki's favorite coffee shop. His boyfriend sat across from him, having met Tony right after work. He was turning his wide brim tea cup in small circles as he was lost in thought.

Tony didn't mind vegging out together. He was tired from work, and he didn't have to ask to know that Loki was.

A woman with an ornately groomed poodle walked past the window. "Tony," Loki said. Tony had to tear his attention away from the rhinestone covered bows on the dog's ears. Loki blinked. He looked exhausted.

"What?"

Loki brushed his fingers against his lips, glancing away. "Did something happen at work?" Tony guessed.

“No.” Loki picked up his tea mug, attention turning back towards the window. Tony watched him for a moment, wondering if Loki had just forgotten what he was going to say, or if he was losing his nerve. Tony breathed in. He looked for the poodle, but it had disappeared around the block.

“Tony, I—”

As soon as Tony glanced back, Loki stopped speaking. He stared at his teacup instead, eyebrows twitching downward. “Yes?” Tony asked. Loki licked his lips. “Babe, whatever it is, please spit it out. You look like you’ve got ants in your pants.”

Loki went to scoff before he straightened up instead, abandoning the teacup. “You introduced me to Jarvis,” Loki said.

“Yeah?” Seriously, what was going on?

Loki studied Tony, looking for who knew what on his face. Tony knew that all he was going to find was impatience. “So,” Loki said after a long moment. “I should introduce you to my family as well.”

Fuck.

Tony remembered the hesitant questions as dread lurched in his chest. He did not want to spend an afternoon with the Odinsons. He knew more than enough about Loki’s father from working there to know he didn’t want to meet the man. It was going to be uncomfortable and awkward as hell. “And,” Loki continued, leaving no clues for how he interpreted Tony’s silence, “my mother has been wanting to meet you.” He said it almost sheepishly, rubbing his arm at the end.

“I mean,” Tony said. “Only if you want to.” Maybe if Tony gave Loki enough outs, he’d take him up on it. He smiled at Loki, but man if it wasn’t forced. “It’s not like you have to just because I introduced you to Jarvis. I didn’t do it to make you feel pressured.”

“I know.” Fuck. Loki seemed hopeful. “Would you like to come over for afternoon tea on Saturday?”

Tony hoped that he didn’t look as reluctant as he felt. Just because Tony wasn’t wild about meeting Loki’s parents didn’t mean that he wouldn’t. It’d just be one uncomfortable afternoon. He could do that for Loki. “Yeah. I’d love to.”

Loki smiled, and it was genuine and beautiful. Instantly, Tony felt guilty. He was supposed to be a good, supportive boyfriend.

“There’s a painting of mine in my mother’s study. I know you’d wanted to see my old ones.” Loki combed his fingers back through his hair.

Tony did perk up at that idea. “Yeah,” Tony said. “That’d be cool. But you’re still going to do that naked portrait of me, right?”

Loki scowled at him. “No.” He smoothed his tie down. “And I have no new photos to work from anyway.”

“You have the flash drive,” Tony reminded him. “And does that mean that if I put some on the flash drive, you’ll paint them?”

“No.”

Tony smiled, knowing damn well Loki wouldn't if he put a thousand photos on there. "Are you sure?"

"Positive." Loki picked up his tea cup. He seemed happier then, hiding a slight smirk that periodically returned as they sat there. Tony held in a sigh as he reached for his coffee. It was one afternoon. He could do that for Loki.

Chapter 49

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony got dressed up to meet Loki's parents. It seemed like the right way to go, but it didn't make Tony feel any better about wearing the starchy shirt and heavy dress shoes. Tony didn't think he'd ever like wearing the stuff.

When Loki came to pick Tony up, he let himself in. Tony spotted him in the bathroom mirror. Tony turned around just as Loki started to grin. He was almost leering.

Loki took a step forward, setting one hand on Tony's shoulder and brushing off the other before setting his hand firmly there too. "How nice it is to see you dress up for me," Loki said. He held Tony's gaze, but Tony wasn't following his line of thought. "And not some mystery person I think you're seeing."

"Oh, back that one time at work?" Loki's thumbs massaged Tony's collarbone. "That's not my style. I let my winning personality do the work. And my butt."

Loki laughed, leaning forward. Lips pressed to Tony's, soft and affectionate. The bathroom felt ten thousand degrees hotter. "You are quite stunning," Loki said, forehead close to Tony's as he stared into Tony's eyes with such adoration that Tony almost had to look away. Almost. It was like staring into the sun.

"Stop flirting with me," Tony whined. It was a phase he'd never thought he'd hear out of his own mouth, but there they were. "I just finished getting dressed up and we have to be at your parents' house in twenty minutes."

Loki sighed, releasing Tony's shoulders and taking a small step back.

Then Loki reached forward and grabbed Tony's tie, the fabric pulling taut against the back of Tony's neck for a moment before Loki undid the knot with swift fingers. He altered the length of the tie before re-knotting it, and Tony was momentarily too aroused by the hissing sound of the silk against his collar to say anything.

The second Loki was admiring his work, Tony found the ability to speak up, though.

"I know how to tie a tie, thank you."

"This way's better." Loki smoothed the tie against Tony's chest, his fingertips lingering over Tony's heart for a moment.

"Says the guy tying it." Tony paused. His eyes light up. "*Tying* it," he repeated, grinning like an idiot. Loki pressed his lips into a fine line, but then he couldn't hold back his own smile.

"Stop it," he said weakly, taking a step back. "We're going to be late."

"Oh, now we're going to be late," Tony said, stepping around Loki. He was overly dramatic about it, hoping to squash his own stirring arousal with distraction. He immediately recalled how fucking nervous he was about this meeting. That helped a lot. "If I didn't think it was a bad idea, I'd absolutely blow off this meeting for ten minutes in bed," Tony huffed.

Loki's voice came from behind him. "Who said anything about using the bed?"

Tony spun around. "Stop it," he scolded, torn between smiling and really being exasperated. "Stop. We—we've got to go, and I know you don't want to show up at your parents' with sex hair."

Loki opened his mouth to speak, and Tony knew from the glint in his eyes alone that something insolent and seductive was going to come out. Tony held up his pointer finger. "Stop."

Loki's eyes disappeared in a slow blink, his hands dropping so that his thumbs looped in his pants pockets, but the smirk didn't disappear. "Come on," Tony said. He took deliberate, rushed steps towards the door. By the time he was locking up the apartment, Loki was spinning his car keys behind Tony, looking more alert but no less content.

They didn't flirt on the car ride over, and it was just as well when they pulled up outside the house because Tony was turning into a nervous wreck. He felt like he was about to go up on stage again, to promote whatever the fuck it was that his dad was doing. Tony'd been good at faking it, though. He reminded himself of that as he also reminded himself to stop clutching at his thighs as Loki turned off the car.

A hand set on Tony's shoulder and his head snapped towards Loki. "It'll be fine," Loki said with absolute confidence. "I've already told my mother all about you. She likes you and she hasn't even met you. There's nothing to be anxious about."

"What about your dad?" Tony challenged him. Shit. He hadn't meant to challenge Loki. This was supposed to be about supporting him.

A slightly miffed expression crossed Loki's face, but Tony didn't feel like it was directed at him. "He's a cranky old man," Loki dismissed him. "He doesn't even like our dog, so I wouldn't take it personally."

"You have a dog?"

"It is more like a sentient mop that sleeps all day, but my mother adores him."

"Okay," Tony said. "Good to know." He scratched at his shirt collar. Loki squeezed his shoulder.

"I promise it'll be fine."

"No. Yeah. I know," Tony said, smiling. He popped the car door open. "Let's go."

Loki followed him, giving Tony's shoulder another squeeze at the front door before ringing the bell. The door opened almost immediately.

"Loki!" A tall woman with golden curls answered the door, sweeping Loki into a hug.

"Mum—"

Tony felt something against his foot and looked down to see a small, elderly dog with long gray hair staring up at him from beneath shaggy eyebrows. Its tiny stump of a tail motioned back and forth. "That's Bamse," Loki's mom said. "He's very friendly." Tony stared at the dog, unsure what to make of it.

"Mummy," Loki said, trying to draw her attention back for what was maybe not the first time, "this

is Tony.”

“I know dear,” she said, reaching forward to draw Tony into a baffling hug. She smelled like sunflowers. As she pulled back, their eyes locked and it was like Loki’s own insightful, piercing gaze but amped up to eleven. For a brief moment, Tony felt utterly transparent. He wasn’t even sure what he was hiding, just that whatever it was, she could see it.

Come to think of it, Loki had been unsettling like that when they’d first met, but Tony had gotten used to it pretty fast.

Tony smiled at her, making a mental note never to piss her off. She didn’t seem like the kind of person it’d be a good idea to cross. Or maybe he was just nervous. Maybe not.

“Come inside already,” she insisted, the shaggy dog at her heels as they were led to a sunny study. Already, a table was set with tea and a platter of small cakes.

Loki nudged Tony’s arm. He pointed towards the fireplace. Above it, a painting of a garden was framed in gold. Dozens of pink roses were in the foreground, with a lush green clearing behind them and a forest. Tony smiled at Loki, genuinely amazed.

“Where is Father?” Loki asked.

Mrs. Odinson turned towards them, her hand setting on the back of a chair at the table. Tony couldn’t see Loki’s expression behind him, but Mrs. Odinson was having some sort of wordless conversation with her son. “He is suffering from one of his migraines,” she said. “I’m afraid that he needed to lay down.”

“He has them frequently,” Loki said, already smiling at Tony by the time he looked back. “It’s not really something we publicize with the company.”

“Tony, I have coffee brewed if you’d prefer it over tea. Loki said you weren’t much of a tea drinker.”

“Whatever’s easier,” Tony said, feeling Loki shift behind him, but not seeing what he did. Suddenly Mrs. Odinson was handing him a cup of coffee instead, smiling as Tony sat down.

Tony was worried about how the conversation was going to go, but the overwhelming assortment of tiny cakes was the hardest thing about the ordeal. She asked him banal questions, even though it seemed like she already knew the answers to most of them. Tony kept noticing how incredibly golden her hair was. If Tony was being entirely honest, he’d sort of imagined Morticia Addams as Loki’s mother. He wasn’t sure why. But now the whole favoring Thor thing sort of made sense. Thor looked a lot more like his dad.

Of course, the problem with Loki’s mom not grilling him was that Tony started to relax, and that was how he found himself blurting out, “You know Mrs. Odinson, this whole time I was imagining that you had hair like Loki’s, but your eyes are the same.”

“Oh?” She said instantly. “We both have green eyes, don’t we?” That wasn’t what Tony had meant, but he rolled with it. “Loki takes after his uncle on my side of the family. He also has darker hair. It’s funny how genetics work, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Tony said. “My mom looked a lot more like her great aunt than her mother. I think I’ve got a good mix of both my parents, though.”

Loki was sipping his tea, his attention on the dog. Tony glanced down to see that the dog had

managed to get one of the tiny cakes. Looking must've caught Mrs. Odinson's attention too because suddenly she was asking, "Loki, did you feed him that?"

"No. One simply fell onto the floor."

She rolled her eyes, but she was still smiling. "I already get enough grief about his weight as it is."

"He has been nudging my ankle this entire time," Loki said.

"So you fed him?" She sighed, letting go of what probably would've been a lecture if Tony hadn't been sitting there. She glanced over at Tony and then broke into a smile. "I'm so glad that I get to meet you. I've been looking forward to meeting Loki's mystery partner. Did you know that he hasn't introduced me to anyone since his high school girlfriend?" She said it like it was some long running joke.

Tony cringed inwardly, but he wasn't sure what he should say, so he didn't address that at all. "He hasn't met my parents yet either."

She smiled, but it was tight. Tony had the sense that she knew things weren't good there. Loki cut in. "Mum, what was that you were saying earlier about your garden?"

"Oh. Right. I have some roses that I'd like you to take home." She stood up and left the study with quick, clicking heels. Tony slumped.

"I think we may have avoided the subtle hints and complaints that Thor got to meet you first," Loki said, blatantly snatching a tiny cake from the table and dropping it to the floor.

Tony thought about saying something on family dynamics, then decided he didn't want to touch it with a ten foot pole. "Is this the dog you grew up with?"

"We got him during my last year of high school," Loki said. "My mother had wanted to get a dog."

"He's cute," Tony said.

Loki nodded, nudging several tiny cakes aside before selecting another to give the dog. "Thank you for coming today. It won't be that much longer."

"There's no rush," Tony lied. "I'm fine with whatever you'd like." Loki smiled to himself, picking through the tiny cakes again. His mother returned through the doorway with a bundle of pink and white roses.

Loki wasn't wrong. It ended shortly after that, and somehow it was Tony that carried the roses back to the car. Tony settled into his seat.

Loki seemed entirely at peace. Happy, even. Tony was just glad that it was over and no one had eaten him alive. It'd been awkward, but mostly it'd been kind of boring. Loki started to drive them home.

Tony bit his lip. He knew Loki adored his mother, but the comment about not meeting anyone else sort of bothered him. It was like everyone in Loki's life just assumed he'd been keeping secrets from them for years instead of really listening to him or paying attention. Tony wasn't sure how to put it all into words. His chest just sort of ached for Loki. He reached across and set his hand on Loki's thigh comfortingly.

"It has not yet escaped my notice that you are in full dress attire," Loki warned him.

Tony hadn't meant it that way at all, but if Loki was going to interpret it that way, then fine. "Are you still disinterested in the bed? Because if you want to push me up against the wall, I'm fine with that—"

"—Tony, I'm driving." There was the faintest hint of pink on his cheeks.

Tony rolled his eyes. "Now *I'm* the one in trouble for flirting?"

"My place is closer. Let's go there instead."

Tony found himself smiling, but only because of how ridiculous Loki was. "You know, if I'm going to let you ravish me in this outfit—"

"—Ravish," Loki repeated somewhat skeptically. Tony cut him off.

"Ravish," he continued. "Then I want to play out one of the scenarios you've written." Loki gripped the steering wheel tighter. "We can pretend your couch is the old one at work."

"Do you really want me to do something like that?" Loki asked, almost challenging him.

"Yeah," Tony said with full sass.

"...What specifically?"

"That phone thing you wrote was hot. Or you could get creative. I'm going to pretty much demand that you let me see one of those toys I know you've got lying around."

"Okay."

"Okay yes?" Tony checked.

"Okay yes," Loki answered, nearly laughing. "Now please take your hand off my thigh and refrain from talking about it so I can still walk into my building with grace."

"When you say that it makes me want to get you all bothered—"

"—Please don't," Loki said.

Tony set his hands in his lap. "Fine. But only because I like you."

"What a relief. Here I thought you only tolerated me."

"Sometimes," Tony said. Loki shook his head and Tony let his head fall back in the seat. "You know, that went better than I'd planned."

"You planned for it to be a complete disaster?"

"No," Tony said. "But I don't know. It was better."

"She does like you," Loki reminded him. He adjusted the rearview mirror.

"What about your dad?"

Loki was quiet for a moment. "He doesn't like anyone, so I wouldn't worry about it." Tony looked out the window, unsure of whether or not he wanted to accept that answer. "We're going to have to get those flowers in a vase before we do anything else when we get back," Loki said.

“You don’t want to pluck out all the petals and scatter them around?” Tony was half-serious.

Loki shook his head. “I can’t see those without being reminded of my mother.”

“Oh.” Fair enough. “So can you drive a little faster?”

“Tony, please.”

“Fine.” Tony went back to staring out the window, but he was smiling like a brat this time.

Chapter End Notes

I want to give a huge shout out to thenizu and her gorgeous sketch of this Tony! <3
https://image.ibb.co/fFwLB8/EEE4_D8_B2_C095_4682_86_DF_F0_AE1420_F236.jpg

And yes, the smutty set up of this chapter will be in the next chapter. :)

Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A few rose petals fell to the floor as Tony stepped into the elevator. Loki pressed the button for his floor, standing tall and formal as if they were about to attend a meeting for work. “You know,” Tony said. “We could pull the stop button.”

Loki glanced over at him without turning his head. “And alert security?” Tony frowned over the bouquet. He hadn’t expected to be shot down like that. “Tony, I had no idea you had a voyeuristic streak.” Tony broke into a grin, recognizing Loki’s dry humor for what it was.

“Why wouldn’t I? I’m terribly good looking.”

“You are terribly something, alright.”

More petals fell to the floor as Tony turned to face Loki instead of the doors. “Think about it. I could press you up against the wall, get you—”

“—on security’s shit list, yes.” Loki reached for Tony’s hair, combing back a strand from his face in a way that was perfectly innocent, and not at all at the same infuriating time. “You,” Loki cooed, right on the edge of patronizing, “need to hold those roses nicely until we get inside my apartment.”

“And you need to keep your hands to yourself,” Tony scolded him, reaching for Loki’s tie in the same instant. He pretended to care about fixing the crooked tie clip, but he didn’t bother looking at it. “We are in a public elevator, after all.”

“We are,” Loki agreed, adjusting his tie himself. “And you’re making such a mess with those petals.”

“Oh. Am I?” Tony said, shoving the bouquet into Loki’s unwilling hands and forcing his boyfriend to catch them as he took a step back. “Let me clean these up,” he said, bending over so that there was a clear shot of his ass. “I’ll just make sure I get all of them.”

He groaned unnecessarily as he stood back up, stretching as if it’d been some sort of big ordeal and saw Loki half hiding his face behind the flowers, embarrassed. “What?” Tony played dumb.

The elevator stilled as they arrived at Loki’s floor. As the door chimed Loki stepped through, roses still held up too high. Tony followed with a swagger in his step.

He stopped beside the door to kick off his shoes as Loki locked it. Loki glanced at Tony as he took his own shoes off, precariously balancing the bouquet. “So.” Tony opened his hand with a little flick, the rose petals falling to the floor. “What do you have planned?”

Loki started to smile, but hid it behind the flowers. “Loki,” Tony said, now wondering if the embarrassment he’d thought he’d seen was actually Loki suppressing that same damn smile behind the bouquet.

The flowers tilted slightly to the side. Loki’s gaze wandered for a moment. “You wanted to pretend that we were back at work, did you not?”

“Yes,” Tony said, trying to follow his train of thought.

“And you want me to surprise you,” Loki confirmed. Tony nodded his head. “I may have an idea.” At that, Loki began walking towards the kitchen like he hadn’t just dangled something amazing in front of Tony’s face.

Tony followed, a million ideas swimming through his mind. The riding crop on the couch. Getting fucked on the desk while Loki pretended to be on the phone with someone. Loki pinning him to the wall while he spewed off some bullshit about quarterly reports.

Glass clattered as Loki set the roses into a vase. He set them on the countertop, artfully adjusting a few of the leaves in the bunch. His expression was intense. Either he was thinking way too damn hard about the roses, or his mind was entirely somewhere else. Tony was impatient. “What—”

“—Sit on the couch and wait for me,” Loki said. The soft edges that usually accompanied his words to Tony were missing. He was being bossy, and Tony was up for it. So up for it.

Tony spun around and started for the couch. He looked way too happy about it.

Tony plopped down on it. The cushion made a satisfying fwoosh sound. Tony didn’t kick his feet up on Loki’s glass coffee table, but he did spread out and get comfortable.

Ordinarily Tony would’ve popped a few buttons on his shirt collar too, but he knew Loki loved him in this kind of attire. The more formal, the better.

In the kitchen, the sink was briefly turned on. Tony couldn’t hear anything else after that. It felt like Loki was taking too long.

Probably because Tony was imagining Loki riding him on the couch and putting a riding crop to good use. He reversed their roles for a while, then returned to the original fantasy. Loki needed to hurry up.

Just as Tony was about to call for him, Loki strode into the room. He didn’t make eye contact with Tony. “Is the report I asked you for ready?” He took off his suit jacket and hung it up on the coat rack. Tony loved the way he looked with just the white oxford shirt, his limber back accentuated by the way the fabric pooled at his waistband and stretched across his sharp shoulder blades. Loki’s head snapped towards him. “Is it?”

Tony opened his mouth. He’d never been good at this. Just saying whatever flew into his mouth sure, but figuring out what to say to fit a scene? Not so much. The one time he’d tried to play into this girl’s French maid fantasy, she’d gotten huffy because he hadn’t been “believable”. Another time with a different guy, Tony’d been told to stop with a pitying pat on his shoulder before they’d abandoned the sexy firefighter schtick and had regular sex instead.

Tony stared at Loki, unsure, and Loki’s eyes flickered down to the coffee table. Tony followed them to the magazine that was laying there. He looked back up. Loki looked at him and then the magazine and then him again. Tony sat up, grabbing the magazine. “Sure. Uh, here.” He extended it out towards Loki.

“That is a magazine,” Loki said dryly.

Flustered, Tony looked up to find that while Loki was holding onto the agitated boss expression perfectly, his eyes were dancing with amusement.

Tony relaxed a little. It was okay if he messed up. Loki would catch him.

Tony cleared his throat. "It's already been published in here, like you asked," Tony said, extending it back out towards him.

Loki plucked the magazine from his hands. He flipped open to a perfume ad and pretended to read something. "You're missing the data I told you to add."

"Well it's too late now," Tony said, crossing his arms.

Loki closed the magazine ever so slowly. "Too late now," he repeated.

"Yeah," Tony said, feeling more daring. "You had your briefs in a knot about it getting published in this issue, and I went with what was available."

Loki took a deep breath, but Tony didn't miss the excitement that lurked under his feigned expression. "Do you know, Mr. Stark, how important a report like this is?"

"You have me write them all the time." Tony picked at his nails, feeling his way into the role. He could be a sassy shit if he wanted.

"Then you should know how tremendous the mistake you have made is." Loki undid a cuff link. "I am growing tired of your flippancy," he said, rolling up the shirt sleeve to his elbow before starting on the other side, "and I believe other disciplinary actions are in order."

Tony shrugged him off even though his heart was starting to race a little.

Yes, he was head over heels with Loki just the way he was, and the stories didn't appeal the way they used to, but that didn't mean that Tony didn't still feel a thrill at Loki getting bossy.

"And what're the disciplinary actions?" Tony folded his arms over his chest. "I'm guessing they have to be good when you're sleeping with your boss."

Loki rolled his eyes, irritated. "This is exactly the flippancy I'm talking about." Tony was on the verge of a smart ass comment when Loki dropped the magazine on the table. It landed with a loud thwack. Tony bit down a smile. "Sit there and do not move until I return."

"Or what?"

"Or what indeed," Loki said with a dark smile that made Tony's stomach do flips. Loki turned and started for his bedroom with just a little too much speed for the high and mighty strut he was trying to pull off.

He left the bedroom door open, which was a shame. Tony would've run up to it and put his ear against it to hear better if he had. Instead, Tony leaned as far off the couch as he dared, listening. Something heavy was slid across the floor. Plastic rattling. The bathroom or closet door opening. A cabinet. Definitely the bathroom, then. More rattling plastic. Silence. Tony couldn't see Loki moving around in the bedroom at all. The second Loki came back into view, Tony threw himself against the couch and tried to act innocent.

Loki had a canvas shopping bag slung over his shoulder and his tie was missing.

Tony was expecting more grandstanding, so when Loki crawled into his lap instead, it caught Tony by surprise. Loki's thighs bracketed his legs, the weight of him pinning Tony to the couch. "You get to choose one," Loki said, sliding the strap of the bag off his shoulder. "And no peeking." Loki's warm hand covered Tony's eyes, making it impossible to cheat. "I have several things in this bag," he said, taking one of Tony's hands and guiding it in past the fabric.

Rough canvas slid against Tony's fingertips. It was hard to concentrate on the bag when he was hyper aware of the points of contact of Loki's torso against his, the bulge starting to press against him. But then Tony felt something cold and metallic and grasped for it. "Lo," Tony exclaimed. "Is this a—"

"—One," Loki said, pressing a finger to Tony's lips. "And that's it."

On impulse, Tony licked his finger. The hand over his eyes pressed harder against his face in surprise as Loki's hips jostled. Tony wished that he could've seen the look on Loki's face. Tony dug deeper in the bag, past the obvious butt plug to find something softer. He curled his hand around the shaft, unsurprised when he found the head and confirmed that it was a dildo. It was his mental image of Loki using it though that really got to him. The thought of Loki gasping, eyes squeezed shut and cheeks flushed as he let it press into the heat of him sent blood rushing straight to Tony's cock.

There was something else in the bag too. It was cylindrical, plastic-like, and had something hard and flat attached to the sides. Tony was no stranger to toys, but he couldn't figure the thing out. Tony let go of it for a moment to feel around the rest of the bag, but it was empty. It was easy to choose between the three items. Tony grabbed the odd object out. "You're sure?" Loki asked.

"Yep."

Tony blinked in the light as Loki pulled his hand away.

In his hand was a long vibrator shaped like a rocket. The flat edges had been its fins. "Huh," Tony said. He turned it on.

"Not so fast," Loki said, snatching it out of his hands. "You're still in trouble." Tony grinned at him. Loki reached for his pants, roughly unbuttoning the top and pulling them open so that he could grasp Tony's cock. "You are going to do as I say if you want to come." He stroked Tony, uncertainty peeking out beneath his commanding demeanor. A rush of heat swept up Tony's groin and through his chest. Hell yes.

"I will do whatever you want," Tony breathed out. Loki's eyebrows flew up in surprise just as Tony remembered he was supposed to be doing the whole disobedient thing. "I mean," he breathed. "If you can make me."

Loki just stared at him for a moment, like it was more than he could process. Tony set his hand on Loki's hip. He blinked, refocusing. "Good."

"But first I've gotta ask why this has such a unique shape for a vibrator—"

Loki rolled his eyes. "It came free with my purchase," he said, letting go of Tony's cock. "And anyway," he undid the top few buttons on his white shirt. Tony started to undo his tie, but Loki grabbed his wrist, holding it in one hand and the vibrator in the other. "I didn't give you permission to undress."

"Fine," Tony sighed.

"Kiss me." Tony leaned forward but in the next instant he was being pressed against the couch as Loki kissed him fiercely, abandoning his wrist to grasp his hair instead. Tony moaned as his tongue slid inside his mouth, domineering and uninhibited. He wrapped his arms around Loki, enjoying the friction against his hips. He'd always gotten off on the feeling of being wanted, but it was on an entirely new level with Loki.

Loki was panting when he pulled back, a strand of saliva snapping between their lips. “Lay down,” Loki breathed out.

“Why should I?” Tony challenged him with devilish grin, eager to see what he’d do.

“Lay down,” Loki repeated. Something changed in his voice as he spoke, but Tony forgot as Loki pushed at his chest. He went to stand up as Tony moved to lay down on his back.

Loki’s face was flushed pink, and there was something almost wild in his eyes. Tony knew him though, and he could still read a bit of uncertainty in his posture. Tony wondered how much teasing it would take for that to disappear and for Loki to lose a little more control and give in to lust.

“Put your hands there. Keep them above your head,” Loki instructed. He was trying to be commanding, and Tony recognized that there was something different in how he spoke. It was hot, whatever the hell it was. Tony did as he was told. Loki grinned to one side. “You are not to move unless I instruct you.”

Tony raised an eyebrow at him. “Or...?”

“Or you don’t get this,” Loki said, twirling the vibrator in his hand. He straddled Tony’s lap, his gaze dropping to Tony’s chest with determination. Tony thought he was going to remove his tie, but Loki just pushed it aside. He popped two buttons in the center of Tony’s chest. Tony gasped as the vibrator circled his bare nipple, bucking his hips against Loki’s to find Loki rocked his hips back in response. “You really ought to show some contrition about that report.”

Tony’s eyes fluttered shut for a moment. Loki’s voice and the way his hips were teasing Tony made it hard to think. “Sorry?”

A low, quiet laugh fell from Loki’s lips. “I believe it is a little late for that.”

He withdrew the vibrator, and Tony almost whined when Loki got up from the couch. Almost. Loki undid his belt with swift, efficient movements, dropping his dress slacks to the floor and kicking them off before straddling Tony again, wearing only the white oxford shirt and his underwear. Tony had no idea how far Loki intended to tease him.

The humming was quiet as Loki pointed the end at Tony’s chest through the shirt, tracing the inside of his arm, along his collarbones, circling his nipples again. Tony bucked against Loki, trying to draw more friction out of him. The hum immediately stopped. “I told you not to move.”

The sharp edge in Loki’s voice sent a thrilling shiver down Tony’s spine. Tony broke the rules, grabbing Loki’s hips as he ground up against him. Loki grasped his wrists, scowling. Tony had a shit eating grin on his face, and he knew that Loki was pressing his lips together because he was trying not to smile too. Loki swallowed, lifting himself up onto his knees. “On your stomach,” he demanded, releasing Tony’s wrists.

Tony rolled over. “Are you going to finally undress me?” He threw back over his shoulder.

Loki settled over him. “I will undress you when and however I please.” Loki’s hands pressed against his shoulder blades, the fabric of Tony’s thin shirt unbearably warm. “And anyway, I like it when you are smartly dressed.”

“I know that—” Tony replied, but just then something clicked. “Hey,” he said, almost accusingly.

“What?” The vibrator hummed beneath his voice, but it wasn’t touching Tony.

He really heard it then, as clear as day. His voice was sort of muffled as he spoke against the couch cushion. “You turned your accent up to like a twenty.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Loki said primly, drawing the vibrator up Tony’s spine. As it hit the bare skin at the back of his neck, thousands of tiny shivers sparked. Tony’s spine curled.

“It’s not fair,” Tony mumbled, rocking his hips against the couch. Loki didn’t seem to give a shit this time. “Your accent makes you sound all sophisticated and hot and shit and mine just sounds like a garbage disposal with a spoon caught in it. Or a gun, probably. That’d fit the image—”

“—I think yours is perfectly charming,” Loki cut him off.

Tony was glad that Loki couldn’t see him roll his eyes. He pulled his shoulder up in a flinch as Loki nudged the vibrator at the junction at his neck. Loki sighed. “Tony,” he said. “You are too stunning to speak that way about yourself. I’ve never thought that about the way you speak.”

“I don’t need a pat on the back—” Loki’s fingernails combed through Tony’s hair. Fuck that felt good. He loved when Loki did that.

“Good, because I don’t intend to pat your back at all.”

Tony huffed out petulantly. If Tony was thinking about it, usually Loki’s accent was a hybrid blend of English and American, with some words and phrases more pronounced than others. He tried to think if he’d ever heard Loki use a full American accent that was similar to his own. Had he? It would be like Loki to spin that to his advantage—Tony gasped as Loki nibbled at his ear, lying against him now. “I intend to turn you around again,” Loki said. “Will you be good this time?”

“I don’t know,” Tony thought aloud. The faint leather smell of the couch and Loki’s weight pinning him down spiked his arousal, but his mind was struggling not make jokes imagining Loki with different American accents instead.

“Then I suppose it is up to me to keep you in line.”

Tony drew in a sharp breath as cool air and weightlessness hit him at once. He wanted Loki back. Tony rolled over, Loki immediately using the opportunity to settle between his legs. He grasped Tony’s cock in one hand, playing with the vibrator against his balls in the other. Tony groaned. “What’re you going to do with me?” Tony asked.

“I would like to see you come just like this,” Loki said without missing a beat.

“In these clothes,” Tony muttered.

“Of course,” Loki said.

“If you’re good,” he added, fingers going lax for a moment.

“I will be,” Tony promised, and the pressure returned.

“You can be so good for me, can’t you Tony?” Tony found it hard to concentrate on Loki’s face again as the vibrator moved under his shaft.

“You are utterly gorgeous like this, aching for it, waiting for me.” Tony knew that little shit knew how his voice could get to him, and it was working. Tony’s eyes fell shut. “Next time I’m going to

dress you up start to finish. I am going to parade you around in the finest clothes knowing what you're wearing underneath. I'm going to spoil you rotten just to see that charming smile and those soft amber eyes of yours." Tony melted a little at the last part. The vibrator traced along his length as Loki's thumb toyed at the head. He wanted to be as gorgeous as Loki said he was. He wanted to be good for him.

"I'll take you out," Loki continued, "knowing that under your suit is the lace that grasps your ass like it can't believe its luck."

"I do have a nice ass," Tony mumbled.

"You do," Loki said. "Every inch of you is gorgeous. Even your sassy accent," he added, humor sparking along the words.

Tony breathed out, smiling, unsure of what to say.

"And you are going to be so handsome when you come for me, aren't you? You always are."

Tony sucked a breath in through his nose, trying to pretend to be a little composed. He wasn't. He was panting and flushed with his lips parted, fully dressed except for where Loki had unzipped his pants. "Even when I screw up a report?"

"Yes," Loki affirmed.

Tony wanted to let Loki stroke him while he talked. He didn't want him to stop. "Will you come for me, Tony?"

Loki's thumb teased at the slit. Tony didn't trust his mouth to work. The vibrator found a sweet spot, and even though Tony wished it'd last longer, he found himself coming, thick white stripes splattering against his chest. For a moment he just laid there. Loki's hand was slower, drawing the last few drops from him.

Tony's eyelids felt unbearably heavy when he drew them open. "This is me being disciplined?"

Loki broke into a smile but didn't dignify that with an answer.

Tony made a grabby hand motion towards the vibrator, feeling a little light headed as he pushed himself up. "Let me show you how to use that," Tony said.

"I know perfectly well how—"

Tony gave him a look, taking it from his hands and sliding down onto the floor. He practically manhandled Loki into the position he wanted, impatiently dragging his underwear off and tossing it aside. "Seeing you in just those and your white shirt is quite a look," Tony informed him before taking him into his mouth a second later and running the vibrator against his own cheek.

"Oh—" Loki's voice was broken by a gasp. The one hand that had been gently sneaking into Tony's hair clasped at it instead. Tony smirked, taking Loki as deep and fast as he could. Loki's feet twitched. He strained to stay still, but he couldn't. He came with a cry, Tony swallowing all of it before tossing the vibrator aside and tearing off his own shirt and tie. Finally.

"That was—" Loki blinked, dazed, trying to find the right words.

"It pays to be with someone that knows their stuff," Tony preened. He stretched his neck. "I'm going to show you how to play with hot wax sometime soon."

Loki rubbed a hand against his face. He smiled at Tony, but he wasn't down from the high of his orgasm yet. Tony sat down next to him on the couch. "I think this calls for a shower together. And maybe cleaning your couch."

Loki glanced down and then away. "I can regret that later," he said. "Let's shower now."

Tony wasn't surprised when Loki reached for his hand, but he definitely leaned more into Loki's space as he walked with him. Sometimes he still couldn't wrap his mind around how they'd managed to be so lucky.

Chapter End Notes

I used very broad terms for what to call their accents because the characters themselves seem hard to pin down precisely and I think that may be best left to a dialectologist. XD Especially since Loki's in this particular story also reflects his attending a US high school.

Since it's all done from Tony's POV, I am curious if you favor him more or Loki? Or both? I always love hearing your thoughts on everything!

Also, Loki winged everything in this chapter. ;)

Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony woke up cold. He reached for a blanket, half-awake, but only felt the fitted mattress sheet. He patted his hand. Nothing. Waking up a bit more, Tony started to sit up. Usually Loki's bed was a nest of throw blankets and pillows that ended up on the floor by the morning. Tony wasn't sure where the edge of the bed was, though. Loki's bedroom didn't have any windows, and the sliver of light coming from the bedroom door wasn't enough.

He decided to carefully feel around the bed a little more and not wake Loki. Tony let out a frustrated sigh. He patted around for his favorite throw blanket with the soft, fake fur. "Where is the damn blanket," Tony whispered to himself, feeling along the other half of the bed instead.

"Here."

Tony flinched in surprise.

A different blanket fell in Tony's direction. The corner landed on his hand. "Lo? What're you doing up?" Tony's voice was groggy with sleep, but he was waking up now. Loki's voice had been alert, not the voice of someone that had been sleeping.

"I woke up and couldn't go back to sleep," Loki half-mumbled. Tony heard the bedsheets rustle, but he didn't feel the mattress shift. Tony reached forward in the dark, fingertips grazing the bed until he found Loki's leg. Tony scooted in towards it until he found Loki and curled himself around him, instantly comforted by the press of their bodies together. Loki's shampoo was a welcome scent.

Loki's hand slid into the one Tony had wrapped around his chest. Loki held Tony's hand with both of his, turning it over and tracing the center of Tony's palm with one finger. "I didn't mean to wake you."

"You didn't," Tony said, wondering how Loki could think that he had. "How long've you been up?"

Loki was quiet for a moment. "An hour," he said, uncertain.

Tony kissed the back of Loki's neck and felt those hands fold around his as he did, Loki's spine curling slightly. He pushed back against Tony to close the momentary gap between them. "Want me to help you fall back asleep?" Tony asked, burying his nose into the crook of Loki's neck a little more deliberately.

Loki rolled over to face him, tangling their legs together and resting his hand on Tony's bicep. "Yes," he whispered, bumping his nose into Tony's before successfully slotting their lips together. Tony curled his fingers in Loki's hair as Loki gently sucked on his lip. It was tender and comforting. Loki's hand splayed in the center of Tony's back before wandering back over his chest and grasping at the thin shirt, holding on. When they parted to catch their breath, Loki rested his forehead against Tony's.

Tony soaked in the affection like a sponge. He wanted Loki to be this cuddly with him all the time. He reached for the blanket Loki had given him and pulled it over them both. "I wish every night could be like this," Loki said. He let out a soft sigh of longing. It if hadn't sounded so heart felt,

Tony might've teased him for it.

"I don't think you'd like losing sleep like this if it were a work night," Tony said, stroking Loki's hair.

"No," Loki agreed. "But it is easier to sleep when you're here." Tony blinked. They said 'I love you' regularly, so why did Loki saying that make his heart skip a beat the same way those words did? Loki leaned his shoulder in closer under the blanket, not losing his position against Tony or their foreheads pressed together. "I miss this on the nights you aren't here."

Tony wrapped his arm tighter around Loki's shoulders. He wished he could see Loki's face in the dark but their words uttered softly between them was immensely intimate too. "I miss having breakfast with you during the week." His shirt was tugged forward with Loki's hand as he adjusted his hold. "You know it's not like we only have to spend the night together on the weekends."

"But it's such a trial when we don't." That was true. Loki was dressed and heading out the door by the time that Tony was waking up, and commuting to work didn't make staying at the other's place convenient for either of them. Besides, Loki pushed his luck with his sleep schedule all the time, and he got downright crabby when he didn't get enough sleep. Tony wasn't good about sleeping either, but that was only when he was working on something. Tony wasn't sure what to say.

Loki wedged his leg in a little more between Tony's, wrapping around it. "I have thought about you staying here, but I don't think you'd be happy without room for your projects. I don't know if there's enough space. Dum-E might like it," Loki said.

Dum-E. Right, this was about what Dum-E wanted. "Babe, are you hinting that we should move in together?" Loki tensed. Tony stroked his hair, teasing with his nails the way he knew Loki liked. "Because I've thought about it too, and you're right. It'd take me less than a week to burn a hole in your rug out there, and I don't think you'd like living in my apartment full time." Loki never complained, but Tony knew it wasn't his style.

Loki didn't answer. Tony didn't have to see him to imagine the melancholy look on his face. "But," Tony said. "That doesn't mean we can't work something out."

Loki's forehead disappeared from against Tony's, but the hand holding his shirt got tighter. The pillow they shared jostled a little with some unseen movement. "We could look at somewhere new to share," Tony suggested.

"I have thought about buying out my neighbor and breaking down the wall to extend this place," Loki said.

"Lo, even with my new job, I can't afford rent in this place." Tony spoke with amusement. Loki's building was a status symbol in and of itself in the city. "And I'm not going to ask you to pay for me. Why don't we look somewhere that doesn't require buy outs and home improvement projects?"

"Nowhere else has this view," Loki said very, very quietly. Tony breathed in. He thought about it. Loki put so much care into his apartment. Everything was decorated just the way he liked it. And Tony loved it, he really did. He could see why Loki would be attached to it.

"Yeah," Tony said, going out of his way to make it clear in his tone that he agreed with Loki.

"You'd have to give it up. But think about a new space. You could decorate it however you want. You're way better at that than I am. And I can shove all my projects into one room so they're out of the way."

Loki was quiet, but Tony was sure he was thinking about it. He didn't know why he thought that, but he was certain. "I'll look into it," Loki promised.

"Okay," Tony said. "No rush." He started to smile. It dawned on him that they were seriously talking about moving in together. "I'd really like that, Lo." He'd never had that with anybody. The thought made Tony so happy he wanted to laugh. "It's going to be great."

He felt Loki's breath drift against his cheek. Loki released his grip on Tony's shirt, instead adjusting his position on the bed so that he could tuck his face in against Tony's neck and shoulder. Then the hand was back to holding his shirt. "I'd really like that too," Loki said, voice showing the first signs of sleep since Tony'd woken up.

Tony pulled him as close as their bodies could allow. Of course now he was wide awake, mind spinning with ideas of a new apartment with Loki. Living with Loki. He kept stroking his fingers through Loki's hair, until he felt the fingers in his shirt go slack and Loki's breathing fall into a slow sleeping rhythm.

It still took him a while to fall back asleep after that, but Tony was content the whole time.

Chapter End Notes

Something extra fluffy because I have a cold that won't go away and therefore I would like to spoil these two. XD

Chapter 52

When Tony woke up the next morning, Loki was still asleep, which was really no surprise. Tony shuffled out of bed and padded into the kitchen to make coffee. He hummed a tune, only half-aware that he was doing it. *Loki and he were moving in together.*

Tony was smiling as he sat down at the kitchen table. He had no idea he was doing it, but as he pulled up some code on his phone to tinker with, he realized. Tony ran his fingers along the edge of his beard, brushing his lip.

It was a peculiar feeling, sort of. It made sense that they'd move in together. They practically spent all of their free time together anyway. It just amazed Tony that it felt so incredibly natural.

He started humming again.

Would Loki want a high rise apartment like this one, or would they look at renovated homes that'd been divided into apartments like Tony's? Tony assumed they'd try and find something that was halfway between their jobs. It'd be nice if they could find something a little closer to Loki's work, though. That way his commute time would be less and Tony could see him a little bit more. Loki hadn't stopped being a workaholic, even when Tony dangled dinner or dates to entice him to leave work early.

And Loki had said something about a workshop for him, hadn't he? Tony had to admit that he'd swooned at the idea. His apartment wasn't exactly ideal for working on stuff. Currently there was a singed hole in the carpet that he'd have to hide from his landlord. It probably wasn't the last either, if Tony was being honest about it.

Maybe Tony could talk Loki into painting something new for their place too. He was excited to see Loki decorate it. This place felt like a palace, it really, really did. Tony didn't have any problem with giving up his old furniture and converting to whatever Loki wanted for their shared place.

And he'd mentioned Dum-E, hadn't he? Loki had zero clue how much Tony adored him for that. That was perfect boyfriend material right there.

Tony was still grinning as he brought the coffee mug to his lips, imagining their new place together.

Tony glanced up when he heard Loki drag his feet into the kitchen. Loki's hair was rumpled in a frizzy bird nest around his head, bags under his eyes as he squinted at Tony. He couldn't seem to process where he wanted to go in the kitchen.

Tony bit back on a laugh.

Loki never would've let Tony see him like this when they first started dating. They'd come a long way. "I made a whole pot of coffee," Tony said.

Loki made some sort of sound, slumping as he wandered towards the machine. He was noisy as he took a mug from the cabinet and accidentally set it down too hard on the counter. "There're danishes and few donuts left in the pastry box," Tony helpfully added.

"Thank you. I had no idea what the contents of my kitchen were," Loki muttered.

Tony bristled at Loki's sarcasm. He knew Loki wasn't a morning person. Tony sighed, sipping his coffee. Loki rubbed his eyes as he poured creamer into his mug. Then he stared at the pastry box a little too long, like maybe he was starting to fall back asleep. After a while he picked one and sat down at the table in the chair next to Tony.

His lips smacked as he took the first couple bites. He was *really* not awake then. Loki would be mortified to do that usually.

"Did you wake up again last night?" Tony asked, brushing his thumb along the side of his mug.

Loki glared at him, his eyes unfocused. "Twice."

"It was all that caffeine in the tea at your mother's," Tony said. Loki glowered at him, slurping from his coffee mug. Tony held in a laugh. He got up from the table.

Tony combed his fingers through Loki's hair, ruffling it a bit obnoxiously. "Well sunshine, I'm going to go take a shower." Loki didn't say anything, and as Tony walked out of the kitchen, he looked back to see Loki slouched over the table, rubbing at his eyes. He'd probably be awake by the time Tony finished getting dressed.

Tony found a clean pair of his own jeans in Loki's bedroom, but he couldn't find a fresh shirt and like hell was he going to wear the one from yesterday. Tony stole one from Loki's closet instead, surprised that Loki had been to the concert on the shirt. There were snakes on the front and scrolling script with a really old tour date. Tony spent extra time in the bathroom styling his hair to give Loki some more time to wake up.

When he strode back into the kitchen, Loki was watering the roses from his mother's garden. He was bright and bushy tailed now, no surprises there. His hair had been pulled back into a makeshift bun at the nape of his neck.

"Are you able to stay today?" Loki asked. Tony grinned at him, raising his eyebrows. The only time he didn't stay was when he already had plans with Rhodey or Happy. "I would like to go shopping," Loki explained.

"For?"

Loki brushed a nonexistent piece of hair back behind his ear. "Clothing," he said, not breaking eye contact, "For you. I'd like to deliver on that promise I made you yesterday. If you're open to it."

Tony smiled in surprise. "Uh, yes," he exclaimed. "Hell yes." He brushed his thumb against his chin. "But there's one caveat to it."

Loki set the vase of roses down, still holding eye contact with Tony.

"You've got to let me pick out something for you," Tony said.

Loki smirked, eyes darting away from Tony and back again. "Deal," he said.

Tony grinned. It was going to be a good day.

Tony walked into the suit shop, Loki right beside him. "I'm shocked that this is where you want to

take me,” Tony said in his driest voice ever.

“You should have a tailored suit,” Loki said. “And this is where I have mine made.”

As if on cue, an older man walked up to them, recognizing Loki. “It’s wonderful to see you, Loki. Are you here to preview the fall collection?”

Loki smiled at him, warm and genuinely friendly in a way that surprised Tony. “Actually Yinsen, today I’m here to get Tony a suit.”

The man smiled, turning his full attention on Tony. For a fleeting moment, Tony felt like he already knew him. Then the feeling was gone. “What did you have in mind?”

“Uh,” Tony said elegantly. He turned to Loki.

“A Brioni or a possibly a Zenga may be a good fit,” Loki said. “One of the newer, more modern styles would be more to his taste.”

“I’ll get something ready,” Yinsen said.

Loki led Tony to the fitting rooms in the back. There was a series of fancy chairs along the wall and a set of mirrors with a platform to stand on. The fitting rooms had curtains with the store’s logo embroidered in the middle. Loki looked at home in his chair. “How long have you been coming here?”

Loki nodded his head slightly, thinking. “I started coming here about a year after I graduated from university and began working for my father. Yinsen has known me for a long time now.”

“He seems really nice,” Tony said.

“He is.” Loki crossed his legs, setting one ankle over his knee. “He is exceptional. He loves his family. He started this store to have a set schedule and see them more often. His daughter just started med school and he has one son in college and another in high school. I’ve met his wife once. She was bringing his lunch to the store.”

Tony liked to see that Loki was friends with the man. Yinsen returned with three different suits and a white dress shirt. Tony took that from him with a slight bit of discomfort. Tony hated buttoning himself up into the starchy thing, but he could get over it. Tony put the first suit on, a light gray set.

Yinsen and Loki were talking when Tony emerged from behind the curtain. They both looked up at him at the same time.

It was all worth it just to see the look in Loki’s eyes as he saw Tony in the suit. Loki was speechless as Yinsen approached Tony.

“The shoulders and the cut aren’t right,” Yinsen said, swift and analytical as he looked Tony over and fused with the waist. Tony had no idea what Yinsen was judging or looking for, just that he hadn’t found it. “Try on the navy blue one,” Yinsen said, handing it to him.

Tony did as he was told, Loki’s eyes wandering after him with longing as he disappeared behind the curtain.

This time Yinsen liked what he saw. “This is right,” he said. “But I don’t like the white shirt. Let me go get something else. Stay right here.”

“Okay,” Tony said, but he was already leaving.

Loki was still smiling at him, openly pleased. “I know it is not your preferred way to dress,” Loki said, expression soft and adoring. Tony loved it. He’d wear the suit all day just to get that look from Loki. “But I hope that you can have happier memories in that suit so that it doesn’t remind you of your father’s ways so much.”

Tony didn’t think that he’d told Loki that formal wear reminded him of his father. He’d never explained his hang ups about it, or if he did, he didn’t remember. He was impressed with how insightful Loki was.

Loki continued, unaware of Tony’s thoughts. “I do think though that there’s a way to make it a little more you. Why don’t you swap out the shirt you have on for your shirt from earlier today?”

“You mean your shirt?” Tony asked. “I was going to ask you. When’d you go to that concert?”

Loki’s eyebrows furrowed. “That’s not my shirt.”

“Yes it is. I stole it out of your closet,” Tony said. True, he’d really had to dig around in there for something that casual, but it’d been there.

“That’s not my shirt,” Loki insisted. “Are you sure you didn’t leave it at my place and forget?”

Tony tossed a deadpan stare in his direction. “I’d remember if I had that shirt.” Tony grabbed the curtain. “I’m going to try it on with the suit and you can get another look at it.”

Tony heard Loki speaking to Yinsen as he pulled the dress shirt off. Tony frowned down at the t-shirt. If Tony hadn’t known Loki better, he would’ve assumed that it’d been left behind by somebody else. Well, if they couldn’t figure out where it had come from, Tony was keeping it. It was kind of cool. Tony put it back on and left the suit jacket unbuttoned before stepping back out.

Loki and Yinsen stared at him for a moment.

“That’s more you,” Loki said.

Yinsen nodded, the light catching on his glasses. “It is a very modern look.”

Tony went to look at himself on the mirror platform. He spun around, studying himself from multiple angles. He found himself smiling. “This is a look that I could do.”

Loki’s smile was fond as Tony glanced back at them. Yinsen seemed approving, but he still held a new dress shirt and tie in his hands. It was a lighter blue with a navy blue tie. “I can try that on too,” Tony offered, if only because he wanted to see Loki react.

“I think that suit is the one,” Loki said, half to Yinsen.

“I wouldn’t let you walk out without it,” Yinsen replied. He handed Tony the dress shirt as Tony extended his hand out for it. There was a thoughtful expression on his face, but Tony didn’t make out much of Yinsen’s conversation with Loki as he got dressed.

It was a very nice look with the new dress shirt, and it was thrilling to see Loki’s eyes get glued to it and his legs shuffle uncomfortably for a moment, but Tony wanted the t-shirt back on. Yinsen came forward to take his measurements. After Tony went back to change, he came out to find that Loki was already standing beside the fitting rooms and ready to leave. “We’re done?” Tony asked, unsure.

“Yinsen will call when your suit is ready,” Loki said, delighted by the idea.

Just then the man walked towards them with a small black bag in hand. Paper tissue peeked out from the sides, but Tony couldn’t tell what it was. Loki accepted the bag from him. “It was wonderful to meet you, Tony,” Yinsen said, reaching to shake Tony’s hand. It was warm. He smiled at Tony, his eyes bright.

“You too,” Tony said.

Yinsen turned to Loki. “Don’t be a stranger,” he said.

“You know you’ll see me soon,” Loki replied. They smiled at each other then, and Tony found himself expecting them to hug. Of course, that didn’t happen. Instead, they left, Loki handing him the small bag.

“What’s this?”

“Look inside,” Loki said.

“I know that,” Tony said, frowning. He dug in to find a small jewelry box. Tony popped it open. “A tie?” It was black with subtle green stitching.

“So you feel less inclined to steal mine,” Loki said.

“I don’t steal them,” Tony said. Loki rolled his eyes.

“I love it,” Tony said. “You know, that didn’t take long at all.” Tony’d kind of been imagining that he’d be trying on a hundred different things for Loki to salivate over.

“Yinsen knows what he is doing.”

“You know it’s my turn to pick out something for you now, right?”

“I am aware, yes,” Loki said, amused. “Where would you like to go?”

“You’ll see,” Tony promised.

Tony took Loki to the biggest department store in the city because he wanted to have options. The moment they were in the door Tony raced towards the men’s department, but Loki didn’t seem to have any trouble keeping up.

Tony decided to work on shirts first. He grabbed a couple of graphic t-shirts before spotting a display of especially soft shirts. He took whatever he wanted on a whim before ushering Loki back towards the dressing room. He set a rather large pile of shirts in Loki’s hands. “All of these?” Loki asked, as if he didn’t know the answer.

“We’re going to narrow it down to one really awesome outfit, but this is where we’re going to start,” Tony said. He pushed Loki towards one of the rooms. “And no suit jacket with it, okay?”

He heard Loki sigh, but then Loki was shutting the fitting room door behind him. Tony sat down on one of the chairs outside, near a large set of mirrors. It took a couple of minutes for Loki to come out.

When he did, Tony had to do a double take. Loki appeared so much thinner and taller in the t-shirt.

He didn't look at ease in it though, and the sleeves were too baggy. Tony got out of his chair.

He took Loki's hands, holding his arms out to his sides. He wasn't sure why. He sort of just had a compulsion to touch him. "It's okay," Tony said. "But I want to see something else."

"I would not have been able to wear a shirt with laser cats on it anyway," Loki admitted, only too glad to step back inside the fitting room. Tony sunk back down into his chair.

He would've been able to wear a shirt with laser cats on it.

Loki came back out in a blue shirt that had a v shaped collar with a couple of buttons on the side. Fuck. He was so tall and lean like this. It was almost possible to see his collarbones, and Tony could make out the shape of his stomach for once. Suddenly, Tony was aware that it was obvious he'd been staring. Loki was fighting down a proud smile, looking away as Tony gawked at him.

Tony cleared his throat. "Yeah. That's better, but I still don't like the sleeves."

"The sleeves?" Loki lifted his arm to the side to get a better look at them.

"They kind of bulge out at the end," Tony said, out of his chair again. "And they're longer than the other shirt."

"What's wrong with them being long?"

Tony dropped his voice down to a low mutter. "I like your arms, that's what's wrong." He gave Loki a soft push back towards the room. "Try the gray one on."

Loki took one step backwards. "I think that shirt's from Thor, by the way," he said, gesturing towards Tony's chest. "I think he might've given it to me as a gift one year. It'd fit the tour date."

"Oh." Loki would want to keep it then. "I was going to steal it from you."

"You can have it," Loki said, grabbing the fitting room door. "Just don't wear it around Thor. He'd remember, and although he wouldn't say it, he is sensitive about those things." Tony gave an exasperated sigh while Loki shut the door. Really, for as much as Loki complained about his brother, he was awfully considerate towards him.

"You don't want me to tell him that I found it under a bunch of stuff in your closet?"

"Is my closet going to be torn apart when I go home?" Loki sounded suspicious.

"You already saw it when you were getting dressed today," Tony said. "And considering that you had no idea that shirt was in there, you wouldn't know what I messed up anyway."

Tony knew he'd won the argument because Loki didn't say anything back.

Tony was tapping his fingers against his legs, listening to other fitting room doors open and close and a few loose conversations when Loki opened the door again.

Tony's brain short circuited.

The soft fabric fit Loki's chest like a glove. It was a high angled cut on his arms, too. Even though it was a simple light gray color, it screamed mature and sophisticated, somehow. Like maybe Loki was a hot, young single dad at a farmer's market that worked at an investment farm. Tony didn't know. He just knew that he didn't want Loki to take it off.

“Of course you like this one,” Loki said quietly, reaching back to undo his hair and rework it back into a bun. Strands were loose around his face from changing. He was fighting down a proud smile again, though. He set the hair tie in his mouth as he fussed with it. “You can practically see my nipples through it,” he muttered from the corner of his mouth before reaching for the hair tie and redoing his bun.

“And that’s a bad thing?” Tony was probably too loud. He didn’t care. “I want to buy you five of them.”

Loki sighed, but Tony thought he was faking it. “Fine. Only for you,” Loki said, combing his hair back from his face. He gave in far too easily to be honest. He liked the attention. Tony knew it.

“Now I’ve got to find you the right pair of jeans. Stay here.” Tony took off for the sales floor. When he came back in, Loki’s door was closed, but he opened it when Tony asked. He was still wearing the shirt that Tony loved. “Try these on first,” Tony said.

Loki glanced at the jeans but it was hard to get a read on what he thought. Tony sat back down in the chair, drawing his legs up to the chair and sitting cross legged. Tony set his chin on his hand, waiting.

When Loki opened the door, he was still in the gorgeous shirt that Tony loved. Tony wasn’t sure why he was expecting him to change it. Loki turned to the side. “These don’t fit well,” he said.

They were too baggy in the seat and they didn’t get the look Tony had been going for at all. “Definitely next,” Tony said.

Loki tried on another pair. And another. Nothing seemed to fit him right, but every time his eyes would dart hopefully towards Tony and linger for a moment before he became analytical again and told Tony why the pair didn’t fit. Tony was just about to call it a day and suggest they go somewhere else when Loki walked out in a dark wash pair of slender fit jeans that complemented him perfectly. “Those,” Tony said immediately.

A smirk twitched on Loki’s lips. “I was thinking the same,” he said. He turned in a circle so that Tony could get the whole effect.

“Yeah, you’re getting those,” Tony said. He wanted to touch Loki again, but this time he didn’t trust himself. If he touched Loki in those jeans, he’d want to get Loki out of those jeans. Loki set his arm against the doorframe, leaning against it.

“So this is the outfit,” Loki confirmed.

Tony had to yank himself out of a daydream. “Yeah.” He scratched at his beard. “And, uh, we’ve got to get you some sneakers. I was thinking maybe black converse.”

Loki smiled, clearly amused. “It will be like high school again.”

“Or maybe something with a canvas top. I just, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you in anything but dress shoes before.”

“I don’t believe I own anything else,” Loki said. He stretched his arm over his head, the shirt riding up and exposing both his abs and the arc of a hipbone. Tony wondered if he knew what he was doing, or if he was clueless. Tony could see it going either way. He was still staring and debating with himself when Loki turned and went back inside the room.

When they went back out into the store, Tony got three more of the shirts he liked on Loki in

different colors. He expected Loki to tease him, but instead Loki smiled to himself until he caught Tony looking. Then he acted aloof. "I hope you wear these all the time," Tony told him.

"Whatever makes you think I wouldn't?"

Tony looked away, feeling the heat on his neck at Loki's voice. "You're comfortable in them, right? Because you checked that I was comfortable when you gave me stuff to pick out, and I know this isn't your usual style."

"I am." Loki started down an aisle towards the shoe department. "I like what you chose today."

"Good," Tony said, more to himself than Loki.

Choosing a pair of shoes was much faster. Loki picked out a pair of canvas sneakers that were quite casual but still somehow managed to have something sophisticated in their style. Tony was happy with them. "There's one more thing I want to get," Tony said. "Wait here."

"Wait?" Loki asked. "I already saw everything else, why not this?"

"I just want it to be a surprise, like the tie was. I'll give it to you as we're leaving. Just look around for a little bit and I'll text you to meet up."

Loki frowned, but he seemed to lose some sort of argument with himself. "I'll wander around."

"And no peeking," Tony said.

Loki rolled his eyes. "When have I ever?"

"Always. Forever and always."

Loki sighed. Tony snatched the shoe box out of his hands and added it to the pile of things he was buying. "I'll text you," Tony said. Loki nodded. Tony headed for the jewelry department.

Twenty minutes later Tony handed Loki a small watch box. Loki's eyes lit up as he studied the watch. "It's gorgeous," he said honestly.

"I figured it's the kind of watch where you could maybe wear it to work but it wouldn't look weird with casual stuff."

Loki went to put it on. Tony reached for his wrist, helping him. Loki stared at the watch on his wrist, and Tony got the sense that he'd get used to seeing Loki wear it everyday.

Loki smiled at him. "It's perfect."

"I have good taste." Tony handed him the shopping bags with his purchases and they started for the exit. "We need to have treat ourselves days more often."

"I think they would lose the effect then," Loki said with good humor. Tony shrugged. He was happy to dress up for Loki, and he was way more than happy to dress Loki up. "Would you like to go out for dinner?"

"That depends on what's for dessert," Tony said, raising his eyebrows suggestively.

"There's a restaurant near here that has good red velvet cake," Loki said. Tony's implication had

flown right over his head. “Or,” he fretted. “We could have dinner and then get gelato afterwards. What kind of dessert did you want?”

Tony smiled, shaking his head a bit before he put on the most obvious tone he could muster and stopped in the middle of the parking lot to look right at Loki. “You.”

Loki paused, eyes going wide for a split second before he smirked instead. “That can be arranged.”

“Good,” Tony said, starting for the car with a skip in his step. “You know, Lo, I’m pretty excited about living together. And think, you’re going to get to see my gorgeous figure all the time.”

“Yes. I may have to start working from home,” Loki answered.

“We both know we wouldn’t get anything done then,” Tony said.

Loki just smiled, so carefree and at odds with his work persona. Tony hoped that would continue to grow when they lived together. He grabbed Loki’s hand, holding it and the the shopping bag strings until they reached the car.

Chapter 53

When Loki dropped by Tony's place unexpected after work, Tony assumed it was because he wanted to spend the night. Tony'd been telling him all week that if he wanted to, he could. He figured Loki was just taking him up on it. His boyfriend lingered in the doorway, Tony's attention dominated by the tablet in his hand as he held open the door.

Loki spun his car keys around on his finger, eyes intent on Tony. "Would you, would you care to accompany me to a viewing?"

"A what?" Tony glanced up from the tablet. He must've misheard.

"A viewing," Loki repeated. "I found somewhere I really love, and I would like for you to come see it before I decide."

Tony rubbed his ear. "Decide," Tony said. "On a...?"

"House," Loki said, the slightest bit impatient.

Tony almost dropped the tablet.

He took a step back from the doorway. "Come inside," Tony insisted. Loki frowned, reluctant even as he stepped inside, and Tony hurried to pull the door shut behind him. Tony walked back over to the couch, flinging his tablet on it before crossing his arms, leaning against the back of the couch. "A house?" Tony repeated, his voice a bit too loud. He tapped his foot.

Loki smiled, but it was brittle and uneasy. "Yes," he said. "Is something—wrong?" Loki seemed hesitant on the last word, and he was holding his car keys too tightly.

Tony drew in a breath. A house. A whole fucking house. "I said let's move in together. How did that turn into us buying a house?"

Loki glanced away. "*I'm* buying a house," he said, an edge creeping into his voice. "I only kept an apartment because I liked the one I had so much. It makes greater financial sense for me to own property, and it has more space. If we're going to live together, we need that space." He raised his chin as he turned to look back at Tony. "I'm not expecting you to pay for it," he said defensively.

"That's not the problem," Tony said, dropping his hands to the couch. He needed to calm down. He didn't want this to turn into a huge fight, but he needed time to catch up and process what was going on. "I thought we were going to be looking at places together."

Loki raised an eyebrow, but it wasn't in the playful way that Tony was accustomed to. It was mocking and combative. "Is that not what we're doing?"

Tony huffed. Loki didn't get it. "Together, Lo," Tony said, some of the wind dropping out of his sails. He combed his hair back with his fingers. "I wanted us to pick out some places to see, but now you've got a whole house—"

"—I said I'd look into it," Loki cut him off. "You said you'd like that."

"Yeah, but not like that! That's not how I meant it!" Tony scrambled to recall if that was the exact phrasing they'd used or not.

Loki shook his head and reached into his pocket.

“Who’re you calling?”

“The realtor,” Loki said. “She needs to know that we’re not coming.”

Tony sighed, squeezing his eyes shut for a moment. “No. Let me see it,” Tony said. Loki watched him with the phone pressed to his ear. “I want to,” Tony said, louder.

“Hello. Yes. I just wanted to let you know that we’ll be a few minutes late,” Loki said. Now that Loki’s attention wasn’t fully on him, Tony noticed the bags under his eyes. He was wearing his lucky tie too, which normally wasn’t a good sign. Not that Loki called it his lucky tie. “Thank you.” Loki hung up. “I’m still not sure that we should go,” Loki said, directing his attention back to Tony. He was offering an out.

“I want to see it,” Tony repeated. “I just—I don’t want you springing it on me out of the blue like this. I wanted to look for places together.”

Loki drew a slow breath in, some of the tension dissolving. “I wasn’t aware of that.” Tony believed him. It wasn’t unlike Loki to take on a project like this, either. It was that whole control thing. “I thought you’d enjoy the surprise.”

It took everything in Tony not to roll his eyes. He wasn’t sure how he managed. Maybe it was the sheer knowledge that if he didn’t keep it together, they’d be back to square one, arguing. “Let’s go see it,” Tony said. Loki nodded, starting for the door.

Tony went to go get his jacket. Secretly, he hoped the house sucked so they could look at new places together.

The car ride over wasn’t exactly comfortable, but it wasn’t awful. They talked a little bit about the house. Loki liked the architecture and the space. He said it had a good backyard. That was about as much as Tony asked.

From the moment they pulled up outside the house though, Tony was almost certain he’d lost. It was gorgeous and charming and elegant and just so fucking perfect that of course Loki had found it. The whole yard had been landscaped. There were flowers and a big tree that had to be a century old. Tony still held his breath as they walked inside though, hoping it would suck.

It didn’t.

The realtor walked them through, talking about granite countertops and hardwood floors. The master bedroom was upstairs. It had a tub that was even bigger than the one at Loki’s place. Skylights allowed the sun inside too. Tony couldn’t wait to see what Loki would do with it.

There was an office with sweeping glass doors that Tony could easily see Loki sitting behind. The living room was huge. In spite of himself, Tony found himself excited. It was when they entered the garage though that Tony knew the search was over.

“This garage can comfortably fit four cars,” the realtor said. “Although, at the moment, that space is occupied by the workshop the previous owner built.” Tony didn’t hear the rest of what she said.

The workshop would easily lend itself to Tony’s projects. He could put their cars in the two spots that were by the door, and he could set up some kind of protective barrier if he needed to. Dum-E

would love having so much space to roll around in. It even felt like the garage had air conditioning or something going on. He could figure that out later. There was already a shelving unit set up that he could store his model kits on too.

Tony was drawn out of his thoughts by the realtor moving again, gesturing for them to follow her. Tony glanced over.

Loki was smiling at him, as smug as hell. Adoring too, somehow.

“Shut up,” Tony muttered at him. Loki’s smile only grew.

As they walked into the house, Loki confirmed that he wanted to make an offer. Tony didn’t pay attention to anything but the potential of an almost immediate move in date and Loki assuring her that they would like to move in as soon as possible.

When they walked back out to the car, Loki was radiant. Smug and radiant. “Yeah,” Tony said. “You did good. I still would’ve liked to pick it out with you, though.”

“Next time,” Loki promised him.

“Right. Because I’m sure I’ll get to cash in on that soon,” Tony said. Loki’s arm came around his shoulders.

“Would it make it up to you if I let you decorate the garage?”

“You were going to let me do that anyway.”

Loki hummed.

“I will be designing the rest of the house, just so that you are aware.”

“Shocking,” Tony said. Then he smiled. They were getting their own place. They’d be moving in. Together. “You know, I am a very capable designer.”

“When it comes to robots,” Loki said.

“Hey,” Tony said. “If I had a mansion or something, I’d make it sleek and cool. You’d be jealous.” Loki made a skeptical sound. “And it’d have a bar and a lab with glass windows, and maybe I’d put it on the beach so I could look out over the ocean.”

Loki didn’t say anything to that as they got in the car. Instead, he offered to take them out for dinner. Now that Tony was in a good mood too, he accepted.

He couldn’t wait to tell Rhodey and Happy.

Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony dragged his pocket knife through a strip of clear packing tape. Just as he began to pull the flaps of the cardboard box apart, he felt Loki's presence behind him and Loki's hand set on his shoulder a moment later. "Let's take a break," Loki said. "You've unpacked dozens of boxes today already."

Tony glanced up at Loki, his neck throbbing with pain as he looked over his stiff shoulder. "I just want to finish up the closet. I've only got five more boxes to go."

The skin around Loki's eyes crinkled as a gentle, patient smile turned up his lips. He was wearing the shirt that Tony had picked out for him. And the jeans, too. His hair was pulled back from his face in a low, messy bun with loose strands around his face that had curled after being sweaty from unpacking the house with Tony. "It's nine o'clock and you haven't had dinner." Loki's fingers softly squeezed his shoulder. "You need a break."

"Is it really that late?" Tony asked, rubbing his eye. Just knowing that made him feel tired. They'd been unpacking since eight that morning.

"Yes." Loki took a step back. "I made dinner."

"You cooked?" Tony questioned. Loki had even less free time than he did, and they almost always ordered out.

"It's just noodles with sauce from a jar, don't get too excited."

Tony's back ached as he pushed himself up off the ground. He swore he felt his stomach growl at the idea. "I'm good with that."

Loki moved with long, elegant strides that Tony slowly dragged after, rubbing the back of his neck. As he rounded the corner of their new kitchen, he saw that Loki had the table set for them.

They'd put Loki's dining table in the kitchen, but mixed his chairs with the ones that'd been around Tony's kitchen table. Two plates from Loki's were set on the table, piled with long spaghetti noodles that were covered in a white sauce with pepper. Wine glasses were set beside their plates and filled with white wine. The forks from Tony's kitchen were set beside their plates, along with his salt and pepper shakers.

Tony blinked.

Maybe it was the exhaustion from moving all day, or maybe it was just being tired and overwhelmed at how new everything was, but Tony's chest felt like it was going to crack open from trying to hold in too much.

Loki casually glanced back in his direction only for his whole expression to morph into concern, his brows furrowing. "Tony what's—"

"—It's nothing," Tony said, taking a few quick steps into the kitchen. Loki met him before he could sit down at the table like nothing was wrong. His sharp eyes searched Tony's although he remained silent, giving Tony the chance to speak. "It's just—all our stuff, together, you know?" He

mumbled the last bit, heat filling his cheeks. Why was he such a sap?

To his surprise, Loki drew forward, wrapping his arms around Tony's shoulders and resting the side of his head against Tony's. He spoke softly beside Tony's ear. "All day," he said, "I've been catching myself wondering if this is really happening." His arms tightened around Tony. "I never imagined in all those months we became friends in the IT basement that we'd wind up here." Tony'd been feeling the same way. "Or how happy I'd be," he added quietly.

Tony wrapped his arms around Loki's waist. It was wonderful just to slump into him, knowing that Loki would hold him and not mind. Loki's weight sank into him too, Loki's breath drifting down his neck and past a fold in his shirt collar, into the warm space between his shirt and back. For a few moments they stayed like that. "I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop," Tony admitted.

Loki let out a deep breath, voice lightened by a smile as he spoke. "Me too."

Tony leaned back so that he could look Loki in the eyes and found him bright eyed and grinning. "Glad to know we're on the same page," Tony said.

"Indeed." Loki straightened, releasing his hold on Tony. "Should we eat dinner before it gets cold?"

Tony nodded, his eyelids feeling heavy as he lost Loki's warmth. He would rather be in bed with Loki pressed against his chest, but now that he could smell food his stomach hurt with hunger.

Tony slid down into the chair, and as Loki took the seat across from him, he was struck by a sense of rightness.

This was where he belonged. This was where Loki belonged. They belonged right there together, and it was like Tony could feel the future unfolding in front of them, with the constant point of sitting at this table like this, together.

Loki grimaced as he took a bite out of his pasta. "Does this seem overcooked?" He poked his fork in his pasta, frowning.

"Babe, I don't care if it's been stale for six months and you burned it. I'm eating it." Tony shoved another heaping forkful in his mouth. Loki's expression softened as he relaxed. Tony watched as Loki ate another bite, his self-critical attitude gone. "It's good," Tony added before he ate another bite.

"I shouldn't have put out wine," Loki said. "I'm going to fall asleep at the table with this." He sipped from his glass anyway. "But we needed to celebrate."

Tony reached for his glass. "We should cheers," he said. "We kind of already started eating, but whatever. Cheers," he said, extending his glass to Loki's.

"Cheers." Loki sipped, and even though he probably thought he was being subtle, Tony caught the proud, adoring way he looked at Tony as he did.

Tony set his glass down. "I'm not getting those five boxes done tonight."

"No, you're not," Loki said, twirling pasta around his fork before taking a huge bite.

"Let's go to bed after this," Tony said.

Loki hurried to swallow. "I'm barely going to be able to get the plate in the dishwasher. You're

going to have to carry me to bed.”

“I’m not carrying you.”

“No?”

“No.” Tony smiled as he took another bite, Loki doing the same. And again, Tony knew they were right where they belonged.

Chapter End Notes

I'd planned this out to be a wonderfully smutty chapter, but that chapter didn't want to come together and this one did. I may do a Halloween frostiron short after this so not sure when the next chapter of this fic will be out but I do hope to fit some more in.

Chapter 55

Chapter Notes

I know the story arc was finished in this a while back, and I was holding out to add some smutty bonus chapters, but these two were just not having it. <3 This'll be the epilogue.

Their flight landed early, for once, like some bizarrely ironic miracle. Loki kept saying that planes were supposed to arrive late, not early, but they found themselves with several hours to kill before they could officially check into their hotel anyway.

They dropped their bags at the front desk to pick up later and headed out into the city.

Tony had picked an unusual itinerary of tourist landmarks by Loki's standards — eating chili, going to a kooky grocery store, walking across a pedestrian bridge over a river and insisting on taking fifty photos of him and Loki and the city skyline — but Tony was as happy as a clam the whole time, so Loki was too.

When they finally checked into the hotel, Tony eagerly insisted on them grabbing a booth at the hotel bar. Loki didn't object. He fiddled with his tie as he waited for the bartender to bring their drinks, noticing as he did that Tony was running his thumb across the keychain Loki had given him ages ago.

"Is it the same, now that you've been here?" Loki asked. Tony blinked, not following him. Loki nodded towards the keychain. "Cincinnati. Is it everything you expected after the keychain?"

Tony broke into a real smile, eyes crinkling at the corners. He set his keychain on the table, his keys rattling around it against the wood. "It's great," Tony said.

"Good," Loki said. "I was worried it would be a let down after so long. I know how you love that keychain."

"I do—I did, want to visit here," Tony corrected himself. He shook his head. "But that's not why I love this keychain so much." Tony's warm brown, beautiful eyes settled on Loki, shining with adoration in a way that still humbled Loki. "This keychain reminds me of your trip up here, and that phone call."

Loki pressed a hand to his face. "—Not that phone call again. I was a wreck, Tony. It's embarrassing."

"No it's not," Tony said, with far too much amusement in his voice to completely disagree with Loki. "Babe," he said, noticeably quieter. "That was the first time you said you loved me." Loki glanced up, surprised. "The first time we said we love each other." Tony shrugged. "I feel like it was a big moment for us, and how things went after that."

Loki felt himself smiling like a sappy idiot. Tony was fucking adorable. Loki looked away, unable to tease Tony for it or stop himself from the joy he felt. Tony nudged his foot under the table.

"Tony," Loki said with a quiet little purr that would've gone way further if they'd been upstairs in

a bed.

In the next moment, their drinks were being set on the table. Tony had ordered something with a straw in it and was sipping it down and staring at Loki as if he knew what he was thinking. Loki just sipped a bit of his wine, smirking.

“Do you think drunk Loki might make an appearance tonight and tell me how much he loves me?” Tony teased.

“Seeing as sober Loki loves you, I don’t see how that would be a revelation.”

“But sober Loki doesn’t cling to me as he says it and sing or fuss over my hair.”

“Would you like me to?” Loki raised an eyebrow. “I can do it right now if you like.”

Tony let him call his bluff. “Fine,” he pouted.

Loki tapped his finger against the edge of his glass. “Sober Loki has plans for you tonight anyway. It’d be a shame for drunk Loki to ruin those.”

“Oh? And what might those be?”

Loki grinned. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“I would!” Tony nudged his foot under the table again. Loki didn’t indulge him, but Tony didn’t want him to either. For a moment they sat there in contented silence, sipping on their drinks.

“It’s nice to take a break from bickering over which couch we’re going to buy,” Tony remarked.

Loki rolled his eyes. “If you make me look at some overstuffed reclining abomination while we’re here, you’re walking home.”

“As long as I don’t have to look at some modernist toothpick parading around as a couch,” Tony said, making air quotes on the last word. Loki glared at him. It’d been a heated argument the first time they’d had it. Everything else in the house had come together, but they still couldn’t agree on a couch, so both of their old ones had sat in the living room together for months.

Another comfortable silence settled in. Loki set his glass down, but still ran his finger along the stem of it. “Tony,” he said. “You may have poor taste in upholstery—” He was interrupted by Tony’s indignant huff. “—But, I’m—glad I called you drunk that time,” Loki admitted. “I feel like it was a turning point for us too, and—don’t *ever* tell Thor I said this, but I’m glad I told him that time.”

“Me too,” Tony smiled. He set his hand against his cheek, leaning his elbow against the table.

“You know, you’re pretty romantic for a guy that’s also written the filthiest stuff I’ve ever read.”

“I’m only putting on paper what’s already in your head,” Loki drawled.

“No. You’re more creative than me. Really.”

“You’ll be saying that tonight too,” Loki answered.

Tony laughed. “I’m sure I will.” He let out a happy sigh, sinking back against the booth. They sat for a while, sipping their drinks and chatting about their plans for the next day and people watching.

When Loki suggested they go up to their room so that he could make good on his promise, he paused as he stood from the table. Tony was tucking his keychain into his pocket, and now Loki understood everything that it meant, and why Tony carried it everywhere like a good luck charm. His chest filled with a warmth that he hadn't had to hide and repress in a long time. "I love you, Tony."

Tony smiled, at him, eyebrows raising as if in a question before something confident and affectionate took its place. "I love you too, Lo."

He held Loki's hand as they went upstairs, contented that he no longer had to care who saw, and delighted at the way Loki squeezed his hand back, a smirk on his lips and a spark in his eye as they ascended in the elevator.

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